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of the National Education Association

Read Across America
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Moving Targets

How do you educate kids who are here today and gone tomorrow?

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High school junior Jaime Power switched schools five times last year.

NEA Today

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Volume 16, Number 6

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recycled paper

More Than Bricks and Mortar

President's Viewpoint

No more stadiums. It's time to help our politicians focus on aging school buildings.

A reporter once asked Isaac Stern how he became such a brilliant violinist. What was the key?

Without missing a beat, Stern replied, "A nagging mother. My mother nagged me to practice, and if I didn't practice, she yelled at me. Nag, nag, nag. At the time, of course, I would've rather been out playing with the other kids. But now that I'm a big shot violinist, I thank my mother every day of my life."

As educators, we prefer to inspire, persuade, and coax our students up learning's steep slope. Sometimes, though, even we have to nag, and while we may not be as good at it as Mrs. Stern, we're no slouches either.

Webster defines the transitive verb *nag* thusly: "to irritate by constant scolding or urging, badger." Interestingly, it comes from *gnaga*, the Old Norse word meaning "to gnaw."

Let's talk about our doing some serious collective gnawing on our politicians. Gnawing's called for, I'm convinced, because of the extremely short attention spans of many politicians and the woeful condition of one out of every three of our public school buildings.

When some politicians are campaigning, they love to have their pictures taken in our schools with the children. But after the election, their minds seem to wander.

Our Association needs to help politicians focus. They must understand that the so-called "school infrastructure crisis" is much more than a matter of bricks and mortar. It affects flesh-and-blood children, their education and their future.

A school's condition signals to the children how serious we adults are about education. Of course this doesn't mean a school has to be a palace, swathed in pink marble and loaded with every high-tech gizmo in creation.

Bob Chase

But to provide a decent learning environment, certain building basics are necessary. And as Jeffrey Hayden's 1996 television documentary, *Children in America's Schools*, showed, some communities, rural and urban, fail to provide the basics.

Indeed, some schools are literally falling apart. Their roofs leak, their plaster's crumbling, their wiring systems are frayed and feckless, their plumbing's unsanitary, and their furnaces are temperamental. Only the creative improvisations performed daily by diligent custodians keep these schools functioning at all.

Other schools are bursting at the seams, with too many students in too little space. Their supply closets have been converted into libraries, their libraries partitioned into classrooms, and their classrooms jammed.

Still other schools are unlucky enough to be falling apart *and* bursting at the seams. I have visited such schools in Passaic, New Jersey, and scores of other communities.

Within them, I always meet teachers and support staff who are heroically committed to the children. And I meet children who are as bright-eyed and eager to learn as any children in the wealthiest school districts.

"It's absolutely heart-breaking," as Linda Tuttle, a middle school teacher and president of the Sacramento City Teachers Association in California, said recently.

"Every day our teachers battle the equivalent of a hostile environment in their efforts to educate our students. It's not fair to the children, it's not fair to the teachers, and it's not fair to the community."

Do the physical conditions of a school make a difference in student learning? Of course they do.

Researchers such as Virginia Tech's Glen Earthman have proven this beyond a doubt. Even the most inspired of teachers cannot entirely overcome conditions that are unfit for learning. And, yes, the physical condition of a school, like the physical condition of a housing project or a subway, affects human behavior.

For the politicians, there really are no more excuses. Tax revenues are up, 48 of 50 states are running budget surpluses, and in poll after poll, the public overwhelmingly supports improvement of K-12 public schools.

State and local governments raised more than $7 billion over the past decade just to build new stadiums and arenas for professional sport franchises.

They certainly can figure out ways of coming up with the billions more needed for something truly consequential—providing new and rehabilitated schools for our children.

As our roads become clogged with $30,000-a-pop sports utility vehicles and the stock market breaks new records, it grows harder and harder to argue our society cannot afford decent schools for all children.

The political planets are in alignment. *Carpe diem*. It's time for us educators to start gnawing on some political consciences. Every child in America deserves a safe and user-friendly school building, a quality teacher, and a first-rate education.

Can We Talk?

What can your Association provide that would help you in your classroom? Send an E-mail message to me at BobChase@nea.org with your thoughts. Thanks.

NEA at a Glance

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Did You Know...
NEA's foundation, the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, works to improve teaching and learning in the nation's schools by ensuring that teachers and other educators have access to sustained, high-quality professional development. To that end, NFIE recently awarded 10 three-year grants. For details, check out NFIE's Web page at www.nfie.org.

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NEA Today this Month

Read Across America

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What do Hollywood celebrities, professional athletes, students, parents, business and community leaders, local Association leaders, and the Cat in the Hat have in common? They're all getting ready to join in NEA's Read Across America on March 2. For details on what could become the largest literacy event ever, see page 7.

Cover Story

4 Moving Targets
Nearly every educator today faces the consequences of a migratory society. It's never easy to teach kids who don't stay in one place for long, but there are ways to make it easier for transient students to succeed. This month's cover story offers practical tips for educating kids who are here today and gone tomorrow. One example: Kentucky teacher Audrey Beasley (right) prepares a school supply kit—she calls it a "care package"—to help the kids at a nearby homeless shelter hit the ground running when they arrive in her classroom.

Christina Freitag

Cover photo by Jim Harrison

Newsmakers

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Which Hollywood actress would like to give teachers movie-star salaries? Get the answer in this month's "Heroes & Zeroes" column.

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Bus drivers in Wake County, North Carolina, fight for the real bottom line—respect.

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Learning

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38 Money
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46 Letters
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Mo

Each year, thousands of students engage in a somber version of musical chairs. How do you educate kids who are here today and gone tomorrow? Some practical tips.

Massachusetts teacher Lori O'Donoghue remembers a nine-year-old student who moved all the time.

"They're moving me again and I'm afraid no one will know where I am," he told her. "So will you look for me?"

Joe Lello remembers a student who transferred schools an incredible 26 times before she reached his fifth grade class at W.T. Cook Elementary, near a naval base in Virginia Beach.

Children are uprooted for many reasons, but experts cite family instability and poverty as the two main causes.

Scores of abused students end up on an endless merry-go-round of foster homes. Other kids bounce back and forth between parents waging custody battles. Still others—like children of migrant workers or military personnel—move when a parent's job moves.

Moving once or twice during the school year may not be harmful. But a 1993 study in the Journal of the American Medical Association found children in families that move frequently are 50 to 100 percent more likely to repeat a grade, or experience a delay in growth or development, behavioral problems, or a learning disorder.

Educators can't, by themselves, cure the social ills that prompt student mobility. But educators can—and do—go to great lengths to teach these students, for however long they have them, and provide the academic and emotional support that might make a difference in the long run.

Here are just a few examples of strategies—big and small—that NEA members have found helpful in reducing the impact of student mobility.

Jennifer Geisey

"We try to make them feel welcome and happy while they're here, but soon they're gone," says Michigan teacher Denise Archer, who works with many migrant students like Jorge Trevino, age 6.

In the Classroom

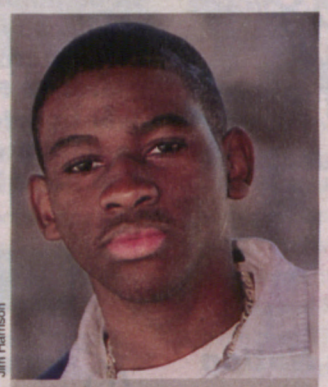
Prepare your class.

Kathleen Sochacki, a fifth grade teacher at Thomas Hooker School in Bridgeport, Connecticut, helps create a smooth entry into her classroom by preparing her class for a new student's arrival.

"I let the class know the new student's name," Sochacki says. "And I might say, 'Johnny may be more active and doesn't like to sit in his seat. We have to let him know the rules of the class.'"

Sochacki doesn't hesitate to give the newcomer special attention.

"I tell my students I may treat new students a bit differently in the beginning. They may need a little extra time."



Jim Harrison

Asafu Thomas went from shy student to team leader with support from other teens.

Get background information.

When transitory kids come into Virginia teacher Joe Lello's classroom mid-year, "they have no academic records with them, and they're dizzy from so many moves they can barely tell you the name of the school or town they've come from."

In lieu of academic records, which rarely follow students who move a lot, Lello tries to get as much history as he can from parents.

"I make it a point to ask the parent what areas the student excels in and whether the child was in any special classes or has any health problems," Lello says.

Other educators call the student's last teacher for background.

"I had a student who was having great academic difficulty, and I had no school record for the child," Connecticut's Sochacki says. "One phone call to the student's former teacher, and I found out the child had a vision problem. We're getting that student glasses through the Lion's Club."

Another strategy: contact other school staff who see a transitory student everyday. Bus drivers, security officers, secretaries, counselors, and nurses can fill in valuable details.

ving Targets

Find out what a student already knows.
Connecticut teacher Valerie Plotkin assesses what new kids know by giving them an assignment her kids have done. "It's too hard to make up exercises on the spot when there are 29 other kids in the room," she says.

Diane Sutherland, a bilingual/migrant educator, evaluates English skills by asking new students to write.

"I had a seventh grade Korean student who I encouraged to write in a journal," the Michigan teacher explains. "I would write a sentence, give her the journal, and let her write back to me. When she wrote back, she mimicked my writing, using correct word usage, tense, and grammar. Within six months, she caught on."

Make a connection.
Children who move a lot need to know they're welcome and accepted.

"The worse thing you can do is roll your eyes and say, 'Where are we going to put him?'" warns Lello.

"I try to learn their name and something about them as quickly as possible," he says. "If you ask about the town the student is from, or what their favorite hobbies are, chances are you'll find something to talk about."

Audrey Beasley, a teacher in Louisville, Kentucky, works to build trust with students who come from nearby homeless shelters.

"I try to prove to them that I'm trustworthy and that I care," she says. One way to send the message: Beasley gives new students a "care package" that includes a notebook, paper, pencils—"all the things they need to become successful students."

Beasley also encourages students to nurture their peers and take responsibility for one another. "They often turn to gangs to get this kind of security," she adds. "I make sure they get it in my classroom instead."

In the School

Form welcoming committees.
The greatest resource for integrating students into a school are the students already there.

At Burncoat High School in Worcester, Massachusetts, Joyce Freeman, a retired adjustment counselor, established the Martin Luther King, Jr. Welcoming Committee.

"I noticed new students walking the halls like tourists," Freeman says. "They were frustrated, intimidated, and lonely. I wanted to form a group that would bring all kids together regardless of race. It's a way of making kids feel equal."

Jim Harrison

Teachers should "open up more" with new students, says senior Evelyn Santana.

When student Misty Moscofian transferred in March of her sophomore year, she was royally welcomed.

"I was in the office registering and another student came in and introduced herself to me," Moscofian says. "She invited me to come with her to visit her classes and meet her teachers and friends."

That student was senior Evelyn Santana, president of the multicultural, 12-student welcoming committee.

"We invite new kids to shadow us to see what the school is really like," Santana says. "We find them friends to eat lunch with and make sure teachers know who they are."

For help starting a welcoming committee, call Joyce Freeman at 508/757-7317.

Create after-school clubs.
The school year is nearly half over at Waukazoo Elementary School in Holland, Michigan, but teacher Denise Archer is expecting an influx of about 100 kids any time now.

Michigan is the fourth largest receiving state for migrant families, many of whom pick blueberries at a large migrant camp near the school.

"We started with 200 students in June, and only 30 of them were still with us by September," Archer says.

By the end of November, only four or five students were left. Most will be back in the spring.

"When they come back, I have to reassess their skills," says Archer. "In some kids, I see good progress. Others have lost everything they learned. They knew the alphabet and now they don't even recognize the letters."

To help bring students up to speed, Waukazoo Elementary started an after-school program called "Amigos y Libros," or "friends and books."

Fifth grade students read with second grade migrant students and help them with homework. "It's a buddy system that gives the migrant students academic support," Archer explains.

The migrant students get the help they need, and the others get a lesson in cultural awareness.

"Some of our fifth graders know Spanish now," Archer says. "And they no longer call the second graders 'migrant kids.' They think of them as friends."

In the District

Jim Harrison

After-school tutoring helped junior Misty Moscofian catch up on her academics.

Work with your community.
In Worcester, Massachusetts, 30 percent of the 24,000 students change schools each year. Some schools see a 70 percent student turnover in the space of just one year.

"We don't look at mobility and wring our hands," says Jim Caradonio, assistant school superintendent.

Instead, the district is one of the few in the nation that's come up with a comprehensive plan for dealing with the student mobility problem.

By joining with the department of social services and other community agencies, Worcester educators created a Mobility Action Plan that includes:

- **A mobility tracking system,** computer software that helps school staff track student mobility. A few clicks of the computer mouse reveal how many kids leave and enter each school throughout the year.
- **Fax machines** in school offices that allow for quick transfer of student records.
- **Centralized school district registration,** which takes place at the Parent Information Center. Workers at the center alert school employees when they see a child is on his second or third school move.
- **Standard textbooks** that are used at the 10 schools with the highest mobility rates. The schools also use the Success For All Reading program to ensure that mobile students' curriculum remains familiar, even though they switch schools.
- **A case worker from social services,** funded through a grant from the department of social services, who works with students' families at schools with high turnover. The case worker alerts educators when families move. She also advises foster families about students' educational progress.
- **Transportation** to allow students who move to new foster homes to stay at their original schools. Using a grant, the school system signed a contract with a local taxicab company to take these kids to their old schools.

These are just some components of Worcester's Mobility Action Plan. For more details, contact Jim Caradonio at 508/799-3018.

—Karen Gutloff

Catching Up with Moving Kids

Advice from A Student

Jaime Power can rattle off her school moves the way some people know their travel itinerary. She knows the exact date and time of every move.

Difficulties with her mom and stepdad led Power to bounce back and forth at least a half dozen times between a school in Millbury, Massachusetts, and her current classes at Burncoat High School in Worcester.

Below, Power tells how difficult the moves have been academically and socially—and what she needs to help her make the adjustment.

How have your grades been affected by moving so much?

When I transferred last September, I had two *B*s and the rest were Ds. I'm getting all *D*s right now. I was surprised I even passed to 11th grade. They passed me because . . . I don't even know why. I didn't even take math classes at first because I was so far behind in the lowest-level class.

What was the worst part of adjusting to your new school?

I didn't have help. I had to catch up on my own. I studied and everything, but I couldn't keep up.

My social studies teacher gave me a test and I got an *F* on it. He was teaching those kids a month before I came into the class. I told him I didn't understand what the class was doing. He said "just read the book, you know what you're doing, you'll be fine." I wasn't fine.

I don't think they really believe you when you say you don't know what you're doing. They think it's a game.

How could your teachers help you more?

I want my teachers to explain my work to me better. My math teacher would explain the work to the class but wouldn't explain it to me one-on-one. I'd tell her over and over again that I needed help.

I really needed to have some individual attention instead of just being thrown in and treated like everyone else. I don't think you should throw a test at someone as soon as they walk into the class.

What other kind of support do you need?

Teachers need to watch what's going on and see how other kids are treating a new student.

I was getting harassed a lot in class because I was new. Boys were grabbing on me and sexually harassing me. People were calling me names and threatening to beat me up.

I was scared and couldn't concentrate. I wanted my teachers to do something about it. When you're scared, you don't want to come to school. I felt that way a lot.

Is there any teacher who has really helped smooth the transition?

My typing teacher. He listens to me and he talks to me. If kids are bothering me, he tells them to cut it out. He makes me feel like he cares about me.

Jim Harrison

Jaime Power says her grades have suffered because of many moves.

Resources

- *Mikey's World.* Written by NEA member Helen Belliveau, this book aims to help young students handle the impact of changing schools. $12.95. Published by Worcester Public Schools. Call 508/799-3061.
- "Student Mobility: An Inside View," *Phi Delta Kappan*, May, 1991. For a reprint, call 800/766-1156.
- "Impact of Family Relocation on Children's Growth, Development, School Function, and Behavior," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, September 15, 1993. vol. 270, no. 11. Reprints available for $18 from the Institute for Scientific Information, 215/386-0100.
- "Highly Mobile Students: Educational Problems and Possible Solutions," ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, No. 73, June 1991. Free. Call 212/678-3433.
- *Helping Transfer Students: Strategies for Educational and Social Readjustment.* Leonard Jason. Jossey-Bass, 1992. $36.45 plus $6.50 s&h. Call 800/956-7739. (For more from this author, see "Innovators" on pages 16-17.)
- Office of Migrant Education, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, DC 20202. E-mail: oese@ed.gov.

Advice from a School Counselor

NEA member Stacy Amaral is an adjustment counselor in Worcester. As part of a grant between the school system and the department of social services, Amaral makes the rounds to seven elementary schools, serving as liaison between the department, foster families, and educators. She says the key to helping transient students adjust is understanding the world they come from.

Jim Harrison

School counselor Stacy Amaral says check your stereotypes at the door.

How do you make sure kids like Jaime don't fall through the cracks?

The best thing for someone like Jaime would be a mentor. It doesn't have to be a school person, it could be someone from the community. But she needs an advocate. She's reaching out, and she's very clear about what her needs are.

What can educators do to help students who transfer mid-year?

Teachers need to be aware of the situation the kid is coming from. They need to know if this child is really behind academically, or if the student is having difficulty concentrating.

Also, foster kids really lack continuity. They need to hear, "I'm going to be here in the morning when you get to school." They don't take for granted that you'll be there for them.

What should educators ask themselves when a new kid transfers in?

Is the kid being moved because of abuse or neglect? Is there a change in the home situation—a new stepfather or divorce? Has this kid been traumatized? Many kids are really severely traumatized and then put in a school situation where they're expected to pay attention. Trauma changes children's development and the speed with which they develop.

Should educators be expected to deal with these issues?

They shouldn't be expected to fix social problems. But they have to know the kid is legitimately having a hard time, that it's not just a case of a bad child who can't adjust.

Educators should become aware of the problems and find the appropriate person to help.

I'm often able to give educators information about a student's family background. But, too often, teachers wait until they notice something going wrong with the student before they ask for information. They just don't have time to do it all.

What's the biggest mistake an educator can make when dealing with a mobile kid?

To ignore the child. And that often happens if the child is well-behaved and doesn't stand out in any way. Educators shouldn't be deceived if the kid is quiet.

On the other hand, teachers really have a hard time relating to kids who walk in the door and are just bedraggled—dirty and poor. You have to recognize the stereotypes you may have and get past them.

Across the Nation

Dr. Seuss Day CATching On!

NEA's Read Across America gathers steam as members make big plans to celebrate reading on March 2.

Martin Smith Rodden

The Cat in the Hat pops in on students at a Portsmouth, Virginia elementary school. NEA members there collected books for local libraries and sponsored read-aloud events at four schools.

"I have all of your books!" a young reader told the Cat in the Hat when he leapt off the page last fall and right into Portsmouth, Virginia's Lakeview Elementary.

The Cat was in Portsmouth to participate in four literacy events organized by the Portsmouth Education Association and to help build momentum for NEA's Read Across America, a celebration of reading planned for Dr. Seuss's birthday, March 2.

On that evening, NEA hopes to generate new enthusiasm for reading by urging every child to be in the company of a book.

NEA members are working to make that happen, all across the country:

- In Fall River, Massachusetts, third grade teacher Gloria Morrissette's third graders have collected 38 Seuss books, which they read to kindergarten students for the last 20 minutes of each school day. They're also studying Seuss's life and will have a huge party for him on March 2.

"My students have latched onto this Seuss idea," Morrissette, a 36-year veteran, says. "We're an inner-city school in a poor community. There are a lot of reasons for despair. But my students are drawing inspiration from the fact that it took Dr. Seuss 48 drafts to finally get *Cat in the Hat* right."

- In Grand Rapids, Michigan, retired teachers and a local bookstore are planning an event for recent immigrant children. They hope to make the kids feel comfortable in their new community and give reading a boost.
- In West Lake City, Utah, sixth grader Jessica Burnside recently wrote a letter to "Special Generous Bookstore People," urging their support of Read Across America.

"We're celebrating by buying books for our homeless shelter pen pals," Burnside wrote. "We're earning money with aluminum cans, but we need your help. If you help us with a discount, then we can help you by shopping at your store."

At presstime, Burnside and her fellow sixth-grade organizers had raised more than $800.

- In St. John Parish in Louisiana, NEA Executive Committee member Iona Holloway reports that education support personnel are playing a major role in organizing Read Across America events in the state.

"We are ready to act rather than react to this special night," she says.

- So are members of the Screen Actors Guild Foundation's Book Pals program. They're recruiting celebrities for public readings. Many top actors are signing on.
- Random House publishers have sent out materials to 2,000 bookstore managers, urging them to sponsor events on March 2.
- NEA's other Read Across America partner organizations—including the American Library Association, the PTA, and Reading Is Fundamental—are also making big plans for the celebration night. MBNA America Bank, N.A., supplier of the NEA credit and deposit programs, has given generously in support of the event.

As March 2 looms closer, NEA activists are doing anything and everything to get the word out, including distributing Cat-in-the-Hat hats, stickers, certificates, and more.

Gail Pittman, the Portsmouth, Virginia, UniServ director who helped organize events there, loves the hoopla.

"It's a lot of hard work organizing these reading events," she says. "But we're tapping into something special with our children, and I look forward to doing it again."

Pledge To Participate in Read Across America

What can you do to join in NEA's unprecedented national celebration of reading?

- Visit the Read Across America Web site at www.nea.org/readacross.
- Pledge to participate.
- Pick up ideas from the Web site for celebrating Read Across America in your community.
- For more information, call Read Across America's Fax-on-Demand service at 888/747-READ.

Heroes & Zeroes

Hypothetical Hero of the Month: actress Ashley Judd. When asked by *Entertainment Weekly* what she'd do if she were the most powerful person in Hollywood, Judd responded: "I would invert salaries so that teachers would make what actors do." Applause!

AP/Wide World

Hypocritical Zero of the Month: New York Senator Al D'Amato for scapegoating teachers and their unions. In a series of TV ads, D'Amato criticizes teacher unions for allegedly blocking reform, but says nothing of his own record. He's voted to cut federal funding for Head Start, student loans, scholarships, school lunches, elementary education, higher education, and child nutrition. Rotten D'Amatoes all around.

A Forward Logo-motion Award to Duke University for telling companies that make items sporting university logos that they must pledge not to use sweatshop labor. Student activists share the credit, as Duke is one of only a few colleges now including codes of conduct in contracts with manufacturers.

What do you get when you combine a crafty Fox with school lunches? School cafeteria advertising that promotes Fox's new animated film. Some schools, notes the *Wall Street Journal*, have displayed lunch menus featuring an *Anastasia* game that "folds out to reveal a movie ad and a come-on to buy *Anastasia* toys from Shell Oil Co. gas stations."

For leap-frogging onto a good thing, kudos to NEA member Mark Finlayson. The Pennsylvania teacher plans to donate a portion of the proceeds from his new book, *Front Frog Fred and Back Frog Jack*, to help a local orphanage. For details on the book—illustrator Mirinda Buxton is also an NEA member—and Finlayson's dream of creating a foundation, go to www.mrsunshine.com.

On the Hill

Seat at the Drafting Table

Nashville's new Jere Baxter Middle School features a video conference room, full Internet access, and something *really* special—items specifically requested by classroom teachers.

Says building rep Claudia Kennedy: "Our principal asked us what we needed—then took our list seriously."

Teachers asked for and received:

- A sink, a telephone, and lots of bulletin boards in every classroom.
- Adequate classroom storage capacity, including cabinets and wardrobes.
- A large conference room for everything from committee work to parent meetings.
- No—absolutely no—cafetorium. Instead, the new school got a full-sized gym that can double as an auditorium, along with a "backstage" storage area.

Blacktop *and* Blackboards

There are now at least 10 bills in the congressional hopper addressing school infrastructure needs.

In a letter to President Clinton, 111 co-sponsors of one such bill wrote: "Children cannot learn in severely overcrowded schools or when classroom walls are literally falling down. The federal government helps build and maintain America's highways. Now we must come to the aid of our schools."

What you can do: Repeat this message to lawmakers who see no federal role in school repair and construction. Write your Senators at Washington, DC 20510 and your Representatives at Washington, DC 20515.

Concrete Test Results

In 1996, Dr. Glen Earthman, a professor at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, reviewed four studies comparing test scores between students in substandard and above standard buildings. He found that "in all cases there was a positive difference for students in the better buildings." The findings, Earthman writes, "are of particular importance because of the large number of school buildings across the country that are in substandard condition."

Build It — and They Will Come

Photographs by Peyton Hoge

With the look of a community college and a full-size gymnasium (below), the new Jere Baxter Middle School in Nashville has attracted 145 new students this year.

A new Nashville school lures students, boosts learning, and instills pride. NEA pushes for modern facilities nationwide.

When bugs weren't creeping out of walls, and windows weren't falling out of their frames, Nashville's old Jere Baxter Middle School flung yet *other* insults at its downtrodden inhabitants.

Like the ceiling that collapsed under the weight of rainwater. Or the falling light fixture that nearly hit a teacher.

But thanks to a bond issue and some 14 years of planning, this grade 5-6 Title I school reopened last fall in a brand-new building.

No one claims that sparkling new schools will solve the problems of public education. But new schools can help create the conditions necessary for quality teaching and learning.

Nashville Association activist Claudia Kennedy

Baxter principal Richard Rust says his new school—complete with fiber-optic cabling and a media center with a vaulted ceiling—has attracted 145 new students this year.

Science and math teacher Claudia Kennedy says the new school's larger classrooms produce fewer "proximity conflicts" among kids and create more "professional options" for teachers.

Overall, students "feel more pride in this school," Kennedy says. "They really want to be here."

To instill pride in public schools and focus public attention on the resources needed to make all schools livable, NEA is launching a far-reaching *Modern Schools/Better Learning* campaign this winter.

The campaign aims to:

- Generate public support for the rebuilding of America's 80,000 public schools—60 percent of which need extensive repair or overhaul.
- Convince Congress to form a partnership with states and localities to rebuild old schools, make existing buildings technology-ready and safe, and construct new schools to meet the enrollment surge.
- Support the efforts of NEA affiliates to address school building needs.

At *NEA Today* presstime, NEA President Bob Chase was preparing to unveil the campaign at a news conference featuring both Democratic and Republican state and local officials—plus allies from education, architectural, and business groups.

A new bipartisan poll shows that the public recognizes that school repair and construction are important priorities and supports legislative action to fix this $200 billion problem.

"The infrastructure issue is connected to public concerns about quality in our public schools," Chase says. "Modern, safe school facilities impact everything from class size to technology to student achievement."

Claudia Kennedy, a building rep for the Metro Nashville Education Association, knows exactly what's at stake for urban districts like hers.

"If political leaders want integration to work and want renewal of the inner cities," she points out, "they have to rebuild schools. People don't want to send their kids to buildings that are falling down. We've proven that here."

What You Can Do

Tell your members of Congress that a federal investment is needed to help states pay for modern school buildings. Want to visit such a building? Go to the Jere Baxter Web site at http://edge.edge.net/~baxter/.

The Bottom Line

Off the streets: About 80 percent of the nation's cities, says the U.S. Conference of Mayors, have curfews for teenagers. Half the cities with curfews report lower juvenile crime rates, 21 percent see no drop in crime. The rest just recently set their curfews.

Out-of-field teaching: The latest report from the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future says 27 percent of teachers have no license in their main assignment field. That figure represents a slight jump from the 25 percent out-of-field in 1991.

A stronger profession: Close to 1,000 teachers have earned national certification, reports the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, now celebrating its tenth anniversary. The Board is predicting 100,000 nationally certified teachers by 2007.

Back to the future? A new poll conducted by MTV says most teens—68 percent—see nothing wrong with racial separation as long as everyone has equal opportunity. In 1991, only 41 percent of young people felt comfortable with "separate but equal."

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In the States

Got Holes in Your Pockets . . .

. . . from spending your own money for classroom supplies? Educators in Louisiana finally get help from the state.

Louisiana third grade teacher Rhonda Hale spends her own money at reading conferences on books and materials that "benefit the kids." And, to keep her Shreveport classroom humming, Hale shells out more cash for items like grade books, markers, and tape dispensers.

"The district allocates some money for things like chalk and pencils," she says, "but when that's gone, teachers keep spending to make the rooms nice for the kids and to keep their classes fun and functional."

Hale's not alone. A 1996 NEA survey found that teachers spend an average of $406 a year of their own money to purchase classroom supplies and meet student needs.

Last year, Louisiana teachers—whose salaries are just one rung above dead last in a national ranking—took the problem to their legislators.

During a round of public forums, they told members of the legislature's two education committees that supply purchases were walloping their wallets.

"Lawmakers heard this so often that they took it seriously," notes Lawrence Narcisse, chief lobbyist for the Louisiana Association of Educators.

In response, the legislature passed a budget that included money for school employee raises, computers, and a one-year-only Teachers Supply Fund.

The Fund makes allotments based on a school's student count, paying about $200 per teacher. And it gives teachers control, either individually or collectively in their school, over purchasing decisions—another LAE victory.

The only restriction: A minimum of 75 percent of the allotment must be spent on materials and supplies that are not used within a year.

At Hale's school, A.C. Steere Elementary, that money's already been put to good use. Hale has spent her $211 allotment on a VCR and three reading software programs.

Other teachers have bought items like books, science and math manipulatives and electronic games, telescopes, and magnifying glasses. Yet others have pooled their checks to buy big-ticket items like a television set.

Scarcity, however, always looms. "A lot of teachers have spent 25 percent of their allotment on 'consumables' like ditto paper," Hale reports.

Hale, a building rep for the Caddo Association of Educators, says lawmakers should extend the life of the supply fund and pump in more money. "I hope," she adds, "that legislators see how this benefits the children."

LAE's Narcisse agrees. "Next year, we want to include new people in the program," he notes, "including librarians and anybody else who has contact with students."

Every American educator has a stake in the school supply campaign.

"Nurses don't buy their own syringes," Hale says. "Accountants don't have to buy their own calculators, and most businesses reimburse you when you provide proof of expenses.

"Professionals," she adds, "should not have to put any part of their salary back into the profession."

For More Information

Call Louisiana teacher Rhonda Hale at 318/861-4240.

NEA members (from left) Judy Meachum, Rhonda Hale, and Peggy Calahan didn't pay for the items they're displaying—the Louisiana Teachers Supply Fund did. Amen.

Kiss It Goodbye
When Louisiana Governor Mike Foster was inaugurated in 1996, he promised to forfeit his $95,000 salary if teacher salaries in his state didn't reach the Southern regional average—estimated at $33,182 in 1996-97—in his second budget.

But even with a recent 5.8 percent raise, Louisiana teachers average only $28,347—meaning a rather substantial pay cut for Foster.

"The governor recognizes that salary increases are essential if we are going to attract and keep highly-trained teachers," says Mary Washington, president of the Louisiana Association of Educators.

Oregon Approves Funds
By 73 percent, Oregon voters have approved a ballot initiative—backed by the Oregon Education Association—that provides public schools an additional $150 million for maintenance and repairs, needed materials like textbooks and computers, technological improvements, and more classrooms. The measure allows the state to use a portion of its lottery revenue to pay back a statewide school bond.

No News, Bad News
In Wisconsin, 40 percent of superintendents have delayed or reduced the hiring of new staff this school year because of statewide school budget caps, according to a survey conducted by the Wisconsin Education Association Council and school administrators. The survey also found that many districts have had to delay building maintenance projects and new technology increases, while increasing teacher workloads and class sizes.

Justice in Wyoming
Agreeing with arguments made by the Wyoming Education Association, a district court judge has ruled the state's educational system to be unconstitutional—and given legislators until April 6 to fix problems. This case stems from a 1995 state Supreme Court decision ordering quality education for *all* students.

Less sophomoric behavior: Fewer tenth graders are coming to school unprepared, according to the latest U.S. Department of Education figures. About 18 percent say they enter classes without their homework, a figure down 4 percent from 10 years earlier.

Drink up: Children ages 9 to 11 are now more familiar with Budweiser's frogs than Kellogg's Tony the Tiger, reports the Center on Alcohol Advertising. Alcohol companies, adds the Center for Media Education, are now targeting young drinkers via the Internet.

Foreign language shift: Enrollment in Spanish courses now accounts for 53 percent of college student registrations in foreign language classes. French, the next most popular language class, has seen enrollments drop 25 percent since the early 1990s.

Values: Some two-thirds of the students listed in the annual high school *Who's Who* admit they've copied homework. Some 35 percent of the *Who's Who* students say the greatest crisis facing the United States is a "decline of moral and social values."

On Your Side

Speaking Truth to Power
New Brighton, Pennsylvania administrators fired school librarian Marjorie McNie and evicted her the same day. Now the Pennsylvania State Education Association and NEA have gone to federal court to win her reinstatement.

McNie, president of the New Brighton Education Association, was singled out because she challenged the school board's violation of state special ed regulations and the superintendent's failure to hold teaching certification.

Back at the Books
In 1996, the Willingboro, New Jersey school district laid off three payroll department employees, but kept the supervisor, who knew nothing about preparing a payroll. The Willingboro Education Association took the matter to court and recently won reinstatement and full back pay for the three employees.

Different Kind of Victory
The bad news: Crooked Lake Elementary in Andover, Minnesota has been temporarily closed so that work crews can clean up potentially dangerous mold growth.

The good news: The school board has involved the Anoka-Hennepin Education Association every step of the way. And that's a first.

"We were informed of plans immediately, not afterwards," says local President Walt Munsterman. "Now we're involved before *any* decision is made."

Rounding the Edges
They faced strikebreakers during a 1994 walkout and have won $300,000 in damages for district unfair labor practices during that bitter dispute. But members of the Round Lake (Illinois) Education Association have refused the money, saying it's better spent on students. The trade-off: an extension of the current contract, with new protections like bans on both job cuts for health and library assistants and outsourcing of secretarial and driver slots.

More Than Just Money

North Carolina bus drivers win a significant pay raise and a voice on the job.

Each school day in Wake County, North Carolina, bus driver Sarah Dunn hits the road by 5 a.m. and contends with parents who curse and students who talk back.

Why? "I do it because I enjoy it," she insists. And, after 14 years behind the wheel, Dunn's really good at it.

"I'm the first thing my middle and high school students see in the morning," Dunn says.

"With the right words—or just a listening ear—I can cool the students down and get them in the mood, so that when teachers see them, they're ready to learn."

Until last autumn, Wake County administrators overlooked the value of such experience—and nearly provoked a strike by more than 700 drivers in 12 school districts.

Out of that crisis emerged a labor-management agreement that significantly boosts drivers' pay and gives them a real voice on the job.

The whole mess started when transportation director Wyatt Harper sent staff a letter announcing that the county would fill driver vacancies by offering new hires $10 an hour plus benefits. Current drivers would have to wait until March 1 to achieve parity with their just-hired colleagues.

That angered experienced drivers—many of whom earned closer to $8 an hour. The hapless director then compounded the injury by placing his generous offer to new drivers in a newspaper ad.

The same day the ad appeared, a group of drivers held a press conference and announced strike plans—this in a state where a school strike is a misdemeanor and public employees have no bargaining rights.

Harper's thoughtless actions were "like a slap in the face," explains Dunn, president of the 4,200-member Wake County ESP. "Drivers were really hurt."

UniServ Director Janet Frazier coordinated phone banks and met with drivers to keep them on the job—and employed—but didn't reach some 80 drivers in time to head off their afternoon sick-out in late September.

Les Todd

R-E-S-P-E-C-T. Find out what it means to these jubilant bus drivers, all members of the Wake County ESP.

Frazier persuaded the superintendent not to fire the 80 "sick" drivers, drummed up sympathetic press coverage, and spread news of this dispute to school support staff across the state.

Moreover, Frazier and other staff from the North Carolina Association of Educators channeled drivers' anger into a step-by-step action plan.

NCAE staff listened to drivers' concerns, coached them in bargaining and presentation skills, and helped them draft a proposal for a salary increase.

By the time the school board met—a week after the sickout—teachers, parents, and other residents had rallied behind the drivers.

Positive press coverage of the drivers' grievances—and public sympathy for part-timers' rights generated by last summer's UPS strike—helped.

Facing a mass meeting turnout by drivers and some well-reasoned demands, the board quickly started negotiating—in a state without a collective bargaining law.

"The sick-out scared them," Frazier explains. "It really got their attention."

The parties agreed to a 30 percent increase for drivers over three years, new—and more sane—ways to fill vacancies, and an elected "focus group" of drivers to address other issues and concerns.

That 11-member group, co-chaired by drivers Cedric Parks and Donna Horton, will take up such hot issues as student discipline, continued training, safety, basic working conditions, and respect from administrators, teachers, parents, and the general public.

"Throughout this battle, I kept hearing drivers say, 'It's not so much the money, but the respect that administrators don't give us,'" Dunn notes.

"Drivers are adults. They don't expect to be treated like children," she adds. "The money helps—but there was more."

—With help from NCAE assistant editor Linda Powell

For More Information

Call Wake County ESP President Sarah Dunn at 919/821-3680.

The Bottom Line

Fewer stable jobs: More than a quarter of American men and a third of women are now working at "nonstandard" jobs, everything from part-time work to independent contracting. Nine out of 10 nonstandard jobs do not offer health care benefits.

Unfair play: McGraw-Hill, the textbook publishing giant, saw profits jump 30 percent earlier this year, then forced over 100 employees to become Kelly Girl temps. The employees were fired a month later—and denied severance because of their temp status.

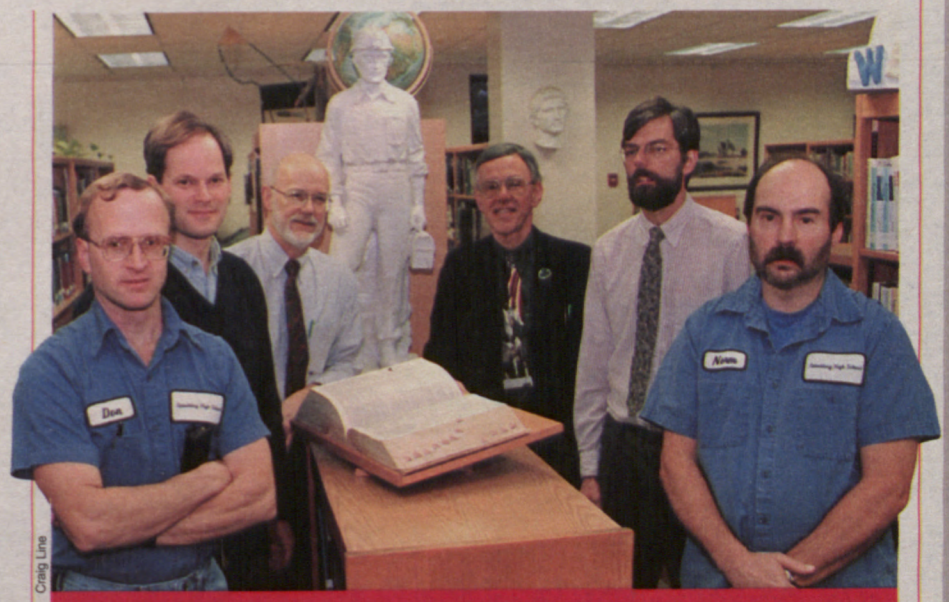
Out of poverty?: Will welfare reform move welfare recipients into meaningful employment? Not likely, says the Preamble Center for Public Policy. In the Midwest, the odds against a recipient finding a job that pays a "living wage" for a family of three are 97 to 1.

More regressive: States are raising the taxes that fall heaviest on low-income families—and slashing taxes that most impact the wealthy. The average state sales tax is now 5.2 percent, up from 4.8 in 1989. State income taxes? Down by $9.8 billion.

In the Community

Pit Marks in the Granite

Vermont residents rally to support school custodians threatened by privatization.



Craig Line

Surrounding a man of granite, members of the successful coalition, from left: Don Lessard, John Lewis, Dick Walton, Richard Wilgoren, Jerry Desmarais, and Norm Frattini.

The Vermont city of Barre and its neighbor, Barre Town, may be billed as the "Granite Center of the World," but the foundation of its stone industry has been eroded by corporate downsizing and the downward spiraling of residents' real wages.

Too many people in the area now work two or three jobs with no benefits. Too many people know how hard it has become to make ends meet.

So when Barre City school custodians—represented by the AFSCME public employee workers union—were threatened with privatization, they reached out to Vermont-NEA members and to the community for help.

And they got it.

The threat came last spring when the 17 custodians were blackmailed into signing a three-year contract with a $1-an-hour pay cut in exchange for two years with secure jobs. In the third year, the school board reserved the right to privatize custodial work.

"Here were custodians accepting a pay decrease and being told, 'In the third year, you're gone,'" notes social studies teacher Richard Wilgoren.

"At the same time," adds Wilgoren, president of the 179-member Barre Education Association and a Barre city council member, "administrators were enjoying a 4 percent raise, and the budget surplus was being given back to taxpayers.

"It's just like corporations that downsize, get rid of long-time employees, eliminate pensions, and then give an increase to executives," he says. "The greed of private business shouldn't be picked up by our school boards."

Hard pressed Barre-area residents tend to agree. And of such agreements, coalitions are made.

When custodian Gregg Bradley, an AFSCME steward, asked Vermont-NEA for help in countering the privatization threat, his local received advice, labor, and legwork from members of the Barre and Barre Town Education Associations.

The AFSCME and NEA local affiliates formed the Anti-Privatization Coalition, which was joined by other allies, like parent groups and Central Vermonters for a Livable Wage.

In July and August, coalition members blitzed the community with letters to the editor, house meetings, and —most effectively—a door-to-door canvass of area residents.

The campaigners' anti-privatization message took many forms, including warnings of a loss of both public control over contractors and a quality, caring school workforce.

But simpler concepts moved citizens to literally grab petitions—urging school boards to adopt a no-privatization policy—from Wilgoren's hands.

"In Vermont, people are sensitive to issues like fairness," Wilgoren points out. "I asked them if they understood the fact that the little guy was being kicked around."

They did. And they signed.

The coalition delivered 1,200 signatures to three Barre-area school boards. A diverse group of citizens spoke against the privatization of custodial and other services.

In November, the Barre City Elementary and Middle School Board relented, voting to direct the superintendent not to bring it any privatization proposals during the life of the custodians' contract, which expires in 2000. That action, in effect, forestalls the contracting out of school support services in the Barre area.

The battle against privatization is far from over, but Vermont teachers and support staff alike have learned a valuable lesson.

When school boards start flirting with contractors, Wilgoren advises, "You need to get out there early and expose what they're doing and its effect on quality—and people.

"Touch the consciousness of citizens," he adds, "and they will respond."

For More Information

Call Vermont-NEA staffer Ellen David Friedman at 802/223-6375. For help in fighting privatization, call NEA staffer Han-il Lee at 303/572-6963 or send E-mail to HLee@nea.org.

It Pays To Reach Out

As part of its Blue Ribbon Campaign for Public Education, the Pennsylvania State Education Association is making grants of up to $1,500 to help local affiliates engage members in community activities.

PSEA-funded Local Involvement Projects have been used to build bridges between school employees and parents, senior citizens, community leaders, taxpayers, the news media, and business leaders.

All Along the Front . . .

In November, Utah Education Association billboards appeared in cities from Provo to Ogden. Now another set, with the message "Teaching Children to Think and Dream," has sprouted in rural areas. It's all part of UEA's campaign to tell Utah residents about the achievements of their public schools.

Back-to-School Night

Back-to-school night is as good a time as any to introduce parents to the Association. Spotsylvania (Virginia) Education Association President Fay Carter and others set up SEA tables at back-to-school nights in 18 area schools.

Parents met caring, committed educators and left with armloads of materials encouraging parent and community involvement in the schools.

'Books on a Stick'

At last summer's state fair, the Minnesota Education Association and Minnesota Federation of Teachers enlisted 60 celebrities—including Senator Paul Wellstone—to read to children at an MEA-MFT booth.

Some 350,000 people visited the booth, where kids wrote "books on a stick"—sort of like corn dogs—and teachers answered questions about public education.

MEA and MFT members continued the reading theme at a joint fall conference, where they collected and donated 1,100 books for school libraries in the Midwest that were ravaged by floods last spring.

More student access? In 1995, the latest year with complete statistics available, nearly 60 percent of computers purchased for schools were bought to replace machines already in classroom use, not to lower existing student-to-computer ratios.

New benchmark: The first annual School Technology and Readiness (STaR) assessment, conducted by the CEO Forum on Education and Technology, says only 3 percent of classrooms are fully integrating technology into instruction.

Information Age: In 1996, 32 states required candidates for teaching licenses to take courses in educational technology. In that same year, 14 percent of the nation's classrooms reported that they had direct access to the Internet.

Married life: Over half America's married women—55 percent—now earn at least half their family's income. About the same number of married women—51 percent—say they do all the cleaning, cooking, and other chores in their households.

The road from kindergarten to graduation

The Compaq Presario ES Series is designed to give your students a running start in school and in life. The Presario ES utilizes the world's most popular operating system, Microsoft® Windows® 95. Which means the system they learn on will be the same system they work on later in life. What's more, every Presario ES comes with a choice of software titles from the LearningPaq Collection – so teachers can

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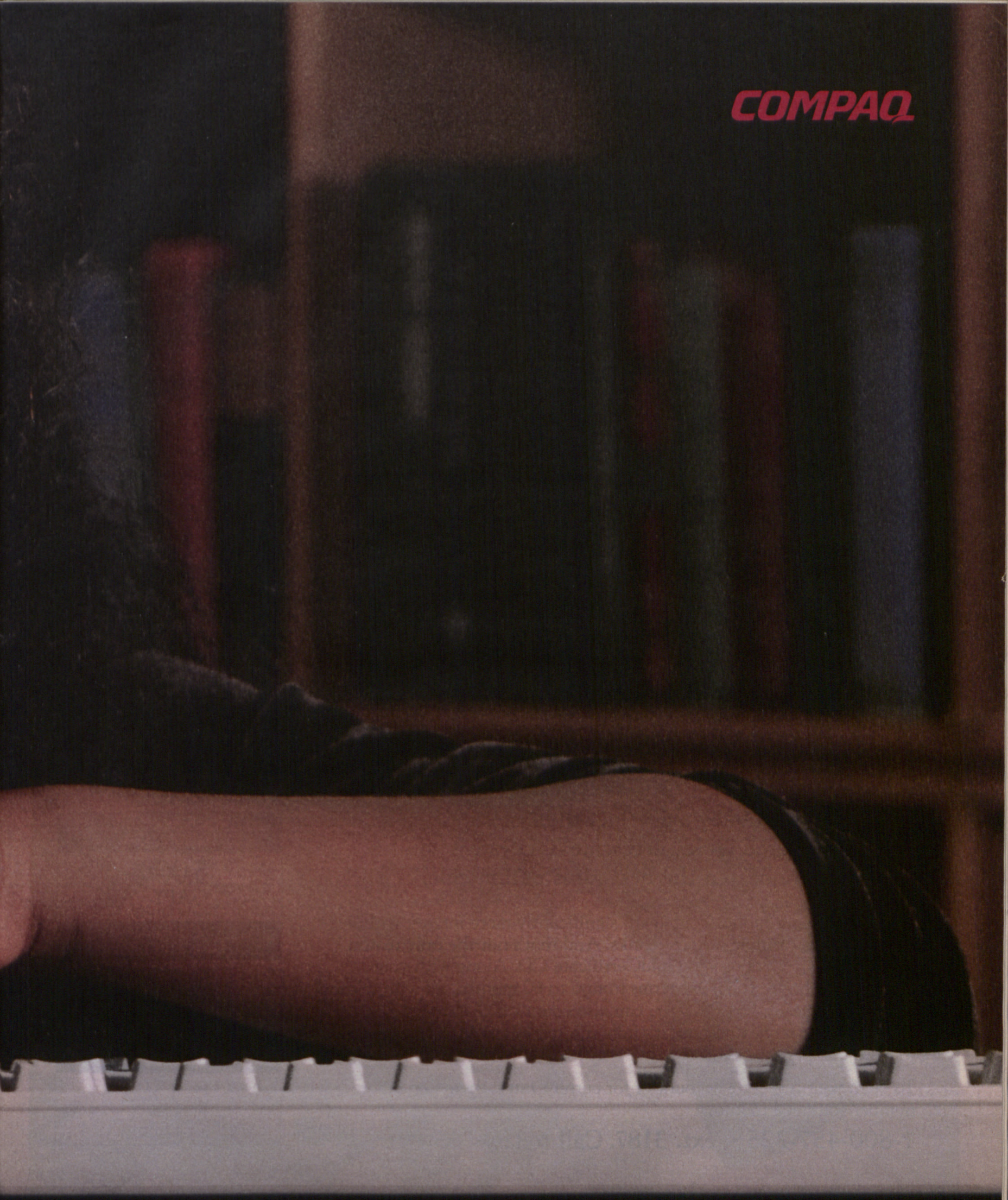

has just had its speed bumps removed.

help kids work at their own speed, according to their own ability. It also has integrated multimedia capabilities and is network ready for Internet access, all of which can expand one's horizons and pave the way to a very promising future. For more about the world's leading provider of computers and our education solutions, visit our web site at **www.compaq.com/education/**. Or simply call **1-800-88-TEACH.**

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***Money* magazine, December 1997.

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CDNT0298

NEA member Debbie McCann knows the value of one-on-one time with students. So she lobbied her state legislature to save a program that's meant smaller class sizes—and more learning—for students in 21 Wisconsin school districts. Details on page 21.

Bill Hurley

Innovators

Values of a Pet Project

Innovator:
Michael Kaufmann

Job:
Director of education, the American Humane Association

Bright Idea:
Lots of teachers have animals—fish, rabbits, lizards, and the like—in their classrooms, and many use the pets to teach responsibility, encourage a culture of caring, and instill respect for living things. But Kaufmann says educators can use animals for far more.

David Zalubowski

"Animals often succeed in reaching troubled children and youth where adults have failed," he says.

"Children can form strong emotional bonds with almost any type of animal," Kaufmann explains, and these bonds can often be used to coax a troubled child to talk, cry, cooperate, care, and learn.

The developing child-pet relationship can boost the child's "self-esteem and empathy," he adds. "Supervised interaction with animals can serve as a powerful way for educators and therapists to open many children's 'closed doors.'"

How to get started? Move beyond the "hamster-in-the-back-of-the-room syndrome," Kaufmann says. When approached more creatively, animals can be used to expand instruction for all kids.

For example, Kaufmann says, "the gerbil—a once-wild, now domesticated native of Mongolia—offers teachers new and vivid ways to stimulate interest in geography, history, biology, art, reading, and writing."

And, when teachers recognize that "the animal is not an object or tool to be *used*, but an active *partner in a relationship*," Kaufmann says, great things can happen with kids who need great things.

Impact:
A growing number of psychologists, teachers, and school counselors are specializing in animal contact for children—and more of them are using the child-animal bond to help at-risk children or children with special needs.

For More:
Contact Kaufmann at 303/792-9900, or send E-mail to HumaneEd@amerhumane.org. For guidelines on establishing a therapeutic animal program, check out *Nature as a Guide: Nature Counseling, Therapy, and Education* by Linda Lloyd Nebbe (Educational Media Corporation, $14.95, 800/966-3382).

The School Energy Czar

Who:
Hector Ibarra

Job:
Science teacher, West Branch Middle School, West Branch, Iowa

Bright Idea:
While exploring energy consumption a few years back, Ibarra's students discovered that T8 light bulbs use 67 percent less energy than standard ones. So the students negotiated with a local bank for a $14,000 loan to retrofit their entire middle school with T8 bulbs.

As they struggled to convince the bank and school board to accept their plan, students learned more than how to count kilowatts. They honed presentation, research, and public relations skills.

The students' energy efficiency plan has ended up saving the school $240 a month on its electric bill. They are now seeking additional loans to retrofit the light bulbs in an elementary and high school.

With help from grants, Ibarra's students also build and race solar cars, examine home energy use, and gather and analyze data from a wind turbine Ibarra installed on school grounds that now powers two school computers.

Ibarra received kudos from President Clinton in a recent speech on global warming, and his students have earned a President's Environmental Youth Award.

Impact:
The bank has been so impressed by the students' energy plan that it has adopted its own energy efficiency plan—and offers loans to local businesses to do the same.

"My students learned that even though they're kids, they can have ideas," Ibarra says, "and the ideas can work."

For More:
Send E-mail to the Iowa Energy Center at iec@energy.iastate.edu.

Kevin Eans

Building HOPE

Sandy Schaeffer

Georgia Governor Zell Miller's HOPE scholarship program—the model for President Clinton's tuition tax credit proposal—pays in-state college tuition or $4,000 a year in tuition at private colleges in the state for all residents who earn and maintain a B average. In USA Today, *Miller unapologetically answered some critics' charges.*

USA Today: *Some people say the scholarships help the wealthy and not the needy.*
Miller: That doesn't concern me at all. . . . The beauty of the HOPE scholarship is that it's based on merit.

Need-based aid is still important, but we've got other types of scholarships to take care of that. As far as minority participation, the percentage of minority students is now at 22 percent. Four years ago, it was 19 percent.

USA Today: *Some critics of HOPE worry about grade inflation . . . some professors admit to giving higher grades so the HOPE students don't lose their scholarships.*
Miller: If a professor is so weak that he's giving grades he ought not to give, I'd say, stop it. But I don't think that happens to any discernible degree.

The percentage of people who get a HOPE scholarship and then can't keep that *B* average has stayed pretty stable (about 50 percent of all incoming HOPE freshmen don't maintain a *B* average their freshman year). That tells me that professors aren't inflating grades.

But you know what? Let's just say it is true. So what?

The beauty of the HOPE scholarship is you can see its impact. A nurse told me she has three children in college on a HOPE scholarship. She says she could not have afforded to send even one to college on her $29,000-a-year income.

Now, I left that lady glowing, and do you think I care whether someone inflated a grade or not? No.

Minority Women **Meet in Lab**

Dianne Martin, associate professor in the department of electrical engineering and computer science at George Washington University, is devoted to the cause of ending the underrepresentation of women and minorities in technological fields.

As a result of her pioneering work with the university's "Bringing Young Minority Women to the Threshold of Science" project, Martin and her colleagues have developed a catalog of the essential characteristics of exemplary programs.

What works in keeping young women interested in math and science?

The minority women we selected—ninth-and 10th-graders—flourish in cooperative as opposed to competitive learning environments. They crave teamwork and interdependence. We also found that exposure to role models, reliance on peer group mentoring, and living in a university setting have a profound impact on these young women.

What are some of the specific problems the students you work with face?

The various constituencies often lumped together under the single phrase "women and minorities" have very different needs, very different learning styles.

Women of color, for example, are much more likely than their male counterparts to have been victims of the "tyranny of low expectations."

It follows that an effective program for young minority women must give special emphasis to high expectations and rigorous standards.

Does your program have any value for a girl who later decides that science and math just aren't for her?

Absolutely! One of the greatest benefits of this kind of program is the marked improvement it fosters in young women's self-confidence, mental toughness, and resiliency. They're prepared for the "chilly climate" they may well encounter as they pursue careers in technology. But, more generally, they're prepared for adversity in all its forms.

Given the severe shortage of qualified workers in the technological workplace, why limit your focus to women and minorities?

We started from a basic, indisputable fact: The interest in scientific and technical fields among students in the traditional talent pool is diminishing. In this precise sense, the population of white males is no longer adequate to our national workforce needs. We therefore face an unconditional imperative to open the technological workplace to traditionally underrepresented populations. Our program was a response to this imperative.

Scott Suchman

For more information on the GW program, write to Young Minority Women and Science, Dept. of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, George Washington University, Washington, DC 20052. Also check out Martin's article, "The Shrinking Pipeline Problem," in Technology and Higher Education, *(NEA Professional Library, $16.95, 800/229-4200).*

Helping Kids Who **Move**

Innovator:
Leonard Jason

Job:
Professor of community psychology, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois

Bright Idea:
After surveying the research on student transiency and finding much of it dismissive of the problems mobile kids can face, Jason did some research of his own.

Using a federal grant, Jason looked at the effects of student mobility on kids in 30 Chicago-area elementary schools. He summarized his findings in *Helping Transitory Students: Strategies for Educational and Social Readjustment* (Jossey Bass, $36.45).

"I found kids develop a lot of social and emotional problems when they enter a new school," Jason says.

"Most schools do nothing at all to help these kids or offer a one-shot orientation program," he adds. "A comprehensive, school-wide approach is the best strategy."

To reduce the impact of mobility, Jason suggests that school employees:

- Hold a mini-orientation for new students to review school rules, identify key school personnel, share important information, answer kids' questions, and give new kids a tour of the school.
- Create and distribute a "welcome booklet" that includes critical lists—special activities, clubs, holidays, rules, and phone and office numbers.
- Get new students together in small groups to allow them to talk about their concerns and feelings.

Robert Kusel

- Tutor new students—using school staff, older students, parents, relatives, and community volunteers—to get them up to speed.
- Increase the awareness of school staff to new students' special needs.

Says Jason: "Welcome the kids and families to the school, get volunteers and agencies involved, provide counseling so kids can share their feelings. These are all things that work."

Impact:
Teachers all over the country are using the strategies listed in Jason's book to help ease the effect of repeated moves on students.

For more:
Order *Helping Transitory Students* from Jossey Bass Publishers at 800/956-7739. Contact Jason at DePaul University, Department of Psychology, 2219 North Kenmore Ave., Chicago, IL 60614.

Need Help **Snagging Grants?**

That great idea you've got tucked away can become reality—with a little help from a grant. Here are a few tips for getting the money.

1 Leave yourself enough time—at least 10 hours just for a $1,000 grant—to do a good job writing the grant proposal.

2 Follow grant-writing instructions carefully—or run the risk that your proposal won't even be considered.

3 Identify who on the grant committee to call, then call with specific questions.

4 Show funders that you have support from your district.

5 Have one person on your team pull together the final document in a single voice.

6 Send any proposal to at least 10 possible funding organizations.

7 Learn from your mistakes by asking funders who reject your proposal about your shortcomings.

Source: *The School Change Checklist* by Miche and Nicole Zocchetti, NEA Professional Library, $4.50 for NEA members, 800/229-4200.

When you're considering insurance, consider the big picture.

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Inside Scoop

Wake-Up Call on Kids' Biological Clocks

Why can't teenagers get out of bed? And why do 20 percent of all high school students fall asleep during school?

New research shows teens' biological clocks are at odds with most high school schedules—and it's affecting these students' ability to learn.

What's a 'biological clock'?

Everyone functions on an internal biological clock that signals when a person naturally falls asleep and wakes up, and for how long. This clock determines how alert or sleepy people will be at different times of the day.

So what biological clock do teens follow?

Research now indicates that as students hit high school age, their bodies shift to later bedtimes and wake-up times—a "sleep late, rise late" schedule. Consequently, they may have problems waking up at 6 a.m. for a 7:30 a.m. bell.

Asking high school students to absorb and understand classroom material at 7 a.m. is like asking adults to function in a work environment at 3 a.m., says Mark Muhowald, director of adult neurology at the Minnesota Regional Sleep Disorders Center.

"Average high school students are being asked to get up during the last half or third of their sleep period," Muhowald says. "They can't be physically awake and functioning at this hour."

Adolescents also need an increasing amount of sleep—nine hours to avoid becoming sleep-deprived, compared with the eight hours required of adults.

But to get this much sleep—and get to school on time—teenagers would have to turn out the lights by around 9 p.m.

So why not just send teens to bed earlier?

That would miss the point, says Muhowald. The internal shift makes it impossible for teenagers to fall asleep as early as they did during their junior high and elementary school years.

Given current time constraints, most high school students don't sleep long enough. That's why they show up to school droopy-eyed and tired.

How does this lack of sleep affect students at school?

Sleep-deprived students often lack a sustained attention span, are more prone to irritability and depression, and are more vulnerable to accidents, according to a 1990 study by Dr. Mary Carskadon, the director of the Sleep Research Laboratory at Brown University's E.P. Bradley Hospital. Carskadon first revealed that the onset of puberty resets teenagers' biological clocks.

An exact link between later start times and improved academic performance has not yet been proven, says Muhowald.

"But there is no question that senior high school students are just too sleepy in class," he says. "When kids awake more rested, they feel more alert for learning."

What's the solution?

Sleep researchers say it would make more sense to have older students start later in the morning and have elementary schoolers, whose clocks are set earlier, be the ones to meet a 7:30 first bell.

Any takers so far?

Three years ago, the Minnesota Medical Association examined the new research on teenager sleep needs and adopted a resolution asking all school districts in the state to examine their high school start time.

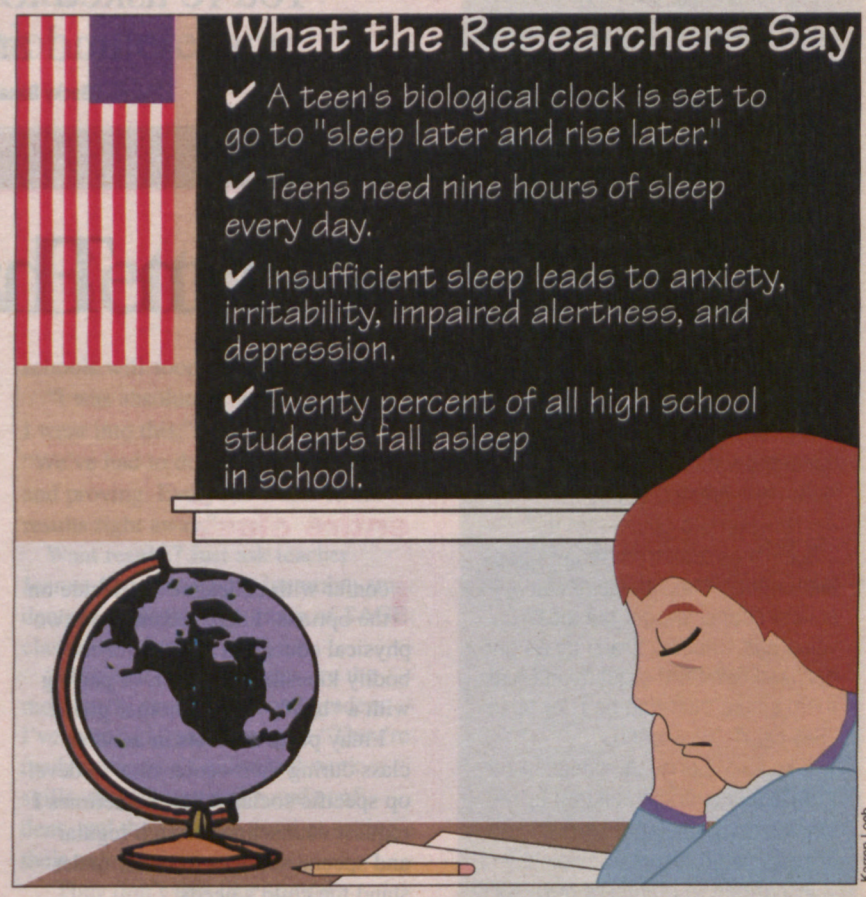
A number of Minnesota schools have responded by switching to later start times. The Edina district led the way last year, shifting its first bell from 7:20 to 8:30 a.m.

The result? "Students are more awake and alert when they come to school," says John Benson, an economics and politics teacher at Edina High School and president of the Edina Education Association. "There's a more relaxed atmosphere, and the students are more interested in learning."

More than 92 percent of parents approved of the change, notes Kyla Wahlstrom, an author of the recent University of Minnesota study that examined the issues and impact of changing start times in 17 Minnesota districts.

This year, the Minneapolis school district has moved its start time back about one hour, a change that affects more than 18,000 secondary school students. Students in the Minnetonka district can opt to begin the school day one hour later.

And, nationwide, more districts are examining their options for shifting high school start times.


What the Researchers Say
✔ A teen's biological clock is set to go to "sleep later and rise later."
✔ Teens need nine hours of sleep every day.
✔ Insufficient sleep leads to anxiety, irritability, impaired alertness, and depression.
✔ Twenty percent of all high school students fall asleep in school.
Karen Loeb

Any downside?

"There may be some merit to considering students' biological needs," says John Lammel, director of high school services at the National Association of Secondary School Principals. "But, unfortunately, there are other issues that must be considered."

Schools and communities would have to make some difficult adjustments to accommodate later start times, he notes.

With classes ending later, students would have less time for jobs and activities—or would get home even later in the day. Bus schedules would have to change, meaning a potential greater expense for the district.

And because the alternative to early high school start times is early elementary school start times, critics point to the specter of young students waiting for buses in the darkness of early morning.

"The research is going to have to be more emphatic before schools will see it as mandatory to change start times," Lammel says.

So will 'times' really change?

In her Minnesota study, Kyla Wahlstrom and her colleagues interviewed parents, teachers, students, transportation staff, coaches, food service staff, and activity advisers.

While acknowledging that a time shift is complex, "We showed that . . . there's no inherent reason why it can't be done," says Wahlstrom.

Says Minnesota's Muhowald: "Kids are in a learning-impaired mode right now. I fail to find a single educationally or societally valid reason to send kids to school exhausted. If the purpose of schools is to educate, then we should send children to school in a condition that promotes learning—not one that interferes with it."

—Tammy Reiss

Need More Information?

- For the most up-to-date research on kids' biological clocks, contact the Minnesota Regional Sleep Disorders Center, Hennepin County Medical Center, 701 Park Ave. South, Minneapolis, MN 55415-1829, 612/347-6288.
- Findings presented at "Contemporary Perspectives on Adolescent Sleep," an international symposium chaired by Dr. Mary Carskadon last April, are available on the Web at www.websciences.org/adolescentsleep.

Students &

Good Stuff

Songs for Peacemakers

Songs for Peacemakers invites young children (K-3) on a musical adventure that teaches peacemaking, anger management, and tolerance skills that can last a lifetime.

This three-part program includes:

- A 30-minute audiocassette, with 12 songs set to rap, rock, and reggae music.
- A teacher's handbook with song sheets and activities.
- A seven-minute music video dramatizing successful conflict resolution techniques.

Max and Marcia Nass, a husband-and-wife team from Bayside, New York, created Songs for Peacemakers to counteract the influence on kids from today's popular culture. Max, an elementary school counselor, got the idea 10 years ago when he broke up a fight between two third graders and had them sing a duet that he later titled "Say Sorry." It worked.

Like "Say Sorry," all songs in the program encourage children to respect one another and work together to solve problems nonviolently.

According to members of NEA's Minority Affairs Committee (MAC), Songs for Peacemakers can be incorporated into any elementary school classroom because it works with or without a formal conflict resolution program.

The MAC team reviewed Songs for Peacemakers and other anti-hate curriculums in response to New Business Item 1996-4, which asks NEA to recognize public school employees who develop curriculums that combat hate groups.

"If we can teach young children to solve conflict peacefully," note the reviewers, "we will be able to stop hate crime from taking root."

The reviewers—leaders in NEA's ethnic caucuses—are current MAC members Malcolm Bailey (American Indian/Alaska Native) and ElDoris Turner (Black) and former members Richard Responte (Asian/Pacific Islander) and Manuel Ruiz (Hispanic).

To order Songs for Peacemakers, contact Educational Activities, Inc., P.O. Box 87, Dept. NEA, Baldwin, NY 11510, 800/645-3739 (in New York, 516/223-4666), Fax 516/623-9282. Special discounted price for NEA members: $39.95 plus tax for the cassette, video, handbook, and reproducible masters. $12.55 plus tax for the cassette and lyrics.

You know you have a problem when . . .

"You're asked to take on too many duties after school—and aren't compensated for them."

Becky Baca, junior high English-as-a-second-language teacher, Odessa, Texas

Dilemma

And in This Corner . . .

What do you do when one student threatens to disrupt the learning of an entire class?

I confer with colleagues to decide on the options. I may recommend two physical education periods for the bodily kinesthetic learner, or pairing with a "buddy" from another grade.

I may place students in another class during their center time to develop specific social skills. Sometimes I request counseling through regular and special services to better understand the child's needs.

My class is known as "The Galaxy of Stars." If someone is disruptive, we ask that student to "depart" the galaxy until he or she is ready to shine. If the behavior persists, I take the student to the principal's office.

Debbie Coonrod
First grade teacher
Fort Worth, Texas

I quietly remind the student of the agreement the student signed at the beginning of the year that mandated productive behavior.

If this doesn't work, I remove the student to an isolated corner. After class, the student and I compose separate lists of the things the student was doing right. Then we each list what we thought was disruptive. We compare lists and design an improvement plan for the next day.

I've seen remarkable—and lasting—behavioral changes.

Steve Thompson
Junior high school science teacher
Cheyenne, Wyoming

My classroom discipline plan consists of a warning, deduction of points, letters and phone calls to parents, and principal intervention.

The plan also includes records of positive notes and a good conduct party every nine weeks.

Usually, the disruptive student is seeking attention the student doesn't get elsewhere. So I try to give positive attention—offering praise and assigning tasks that the student can complete successfully.

Nona Root
Fifth and sixth grade reading teacher
Adamsville, Tennessee

Some students seem to thrive on disrupting classes. Frequently they're older students repeating a grade for whom the district has provided no extra assistance and intervention.

I mentor students and assist in any way possible first. But if the child is a danger to others or isn't open to reasoning, I send the child out. I also document daily the student's behavior and interventions used in class. These children need additional resources that I don't have within my classroom.

Mary Martin
Sixth grade reading teacher
Newcastle, Delaware

Two students in my eighth block class have truly tested my skill and patience this year.

One technique that's worked for me has been to put the students in close proximity to me. "James" usually gravitates to the farthest corner. When he sits nearer to me, I can break down his assignments into short steps.

I also find that frequent contact—a word of direction, a hand on the shoulder—helps bring the student back to center.

I dreaded our Internet day. "Sam" told me he'd already been trained in another class. I knew we couldn't survive the block together, so I asked him to help. The look on his face was priceless. He explained search engines and did troubleshooting. And since that time, he's been far less disruptive.

Tamsin Schroeder
High school English teacher
Laramie, Wyoming

I ask the other students to offer positive feedback to help that student. Classmates compliment a student's outfit or remind the student of a correct answer the student gave in the past. Such a climate usually helps students improve their behavior.

Kenneth Zahora
Fourth grade teacher
Indianapolis, Indiana

Got an Answer?

How do you prove to the public that your students are learning?

Send your answer to *NEA Today* through regular mail, Fax 202/822-7206, or E-mail at **dilemma2@neatoday.org.**

Strategies

You know you've been successful when . . .

"A student writes in her journal: 'You can make the most boring information interesting.'"

Judith Jones, teacher/principal, Coffman Cove, Alaska

Delight

Proving Fewer Means Better

Wisconsin educators are busy gathering proof that smaller classes are better.

It's easy for educators at Robinson Elementary in Beloit, Wisconsin, to share anecdotes about how their students are thriving under a state program that limits class size to 15 kids.

But they're also keeping extensive records to prove their point that smaller classes produce better learners.

Robinson is one of 30 schools in 21 districts participating in the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) program, which reduces class size in kindergarten through third grade in schools with high numbers of low-income students.

For teacher Debbie McCann, having 15 kids in her all-day kindergarten means getting to know each child as a learner.

Before SAGE, she taught two half-day classes of 25 to 30 kids each, where, despite her best efforts, she spent a lot of time on "crowd control."

"Now we have time to teach in a much less hurried way," she says. "We can cover more material, and in more depth. We have more time for socialization, more classroom trips, and more hands-on learning."

SAGE includes a rigorous curriculum, a staff development and accountability plan, a parent-teacher compact, and extended hours that keep doors open for community activities.

What's more, SAGE is attempting to measure the impact of reduced class size by asking teachers to document student progress in minute detail.

Once educators have a taste of SAGE, they're hooked.

When Governor Tommy Thompson threatened to yank the five-year program after the first year, McCann and 70 other educators traveled to the statehouse last spring to fight for full funding.

Thanks to their efforts, the SAGE program was saved and a new wave of schools will soon join the program.

"I was absolutely not political when I went into this," McCann says. "We've had to do a lot of justifying and proving. Everyone wants to see results right away."

Want results? Just ask teacher Jeanne Krueger, whose incoming students were in the first group of SAGE classes last year.

"This year's class of kids are the most ready group of second graders I've ever had," says Krueger. "They're ready in terms of individual work skills, they're very calm and confident, and they're very good at setting their own goals.

"They don't feel like second graders," she remarks. "They feel like older kids in short bodies."

—Bonnie Gardner

For More Information

Contact Debbie McCann at Robinson Elementary, 608/364-6098.

Bill Hurley

Oh, the things you can do—with only 15 students in your class. Debbie McCann and her colleagues are measuring the impact that smaller class sizes can have on learning.

Idea Exchange

Northern Exposure

I teach in a small bush village in western Alaska. With 58 students from preschool to high school, there are only nine students in my fourth/fifth grade class.

Every year, teachers at my school are inundated with letters in March, when the Iditarod dogsled race goes through our village.

In fact, without prior notice, we started receiving student letters from several states back in late September. The most recent letter had such an extensive list of questions that it would take a month of student effort to craft a genuine reply.

This puts me in the position of having to totally change our language arts curriculum, ignore the student letters (that were most likely mandated by one of my fellow teachers), or answer the letters myself. It's a situation that's not fair to me or to the students who worked hard to produce the letters.

So I suggest that teachers first make arrangements with the receiving class's teacher for long-distance projects like this. This helps to ensure that student letters will be answered and that the project will be rewarding—on both ends.

Kim Wardwell
Golovin, Alaska

Outline in Place

Before setting out equipment on the supply table in my high school chemistry class, I put down newsprint and outline each piece. At the end of the period, I can see at a glance if anything is missing.

Kathy Kreidler
Dolton, Illinois

Want More?

Have a great idea? Pass along your tips to *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, Fax 202/822-7201, or E-mail: ideas@neatoday.nea.org.

For more tips, check out NEA's weekly E-mail service, Works4Me. To sign up, send an E-mail to lyris@list.nea.org.

- In the "subject" line, type: sign me up, NEA!
- In the message block, type: subscribe Works4Me
- Send the message.

To submit your own tip, E-mail it to: owner-Works4Me@list.nea.org.

Families &

Good Stuff

Assets to Young People
In *All Kids Are Our Kids: What Communities Must Do To Raise Caring and Responsible Children and Adolescents*, Peter Benson explains eight developmental assets that shape young people's choices and behaviors: support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, constructive use of time, commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. He offers practical strategies for mobilizing communities around a shared vision to develop these skills. 314 pp., $24.95 from Jossey-Bass. Call 800/956-7739 to order.

Hand in Hand
Hand in Hand: Parents, Schools, Communities United for Kids, a project developed in response to Goals 2000, works to get parents and communities to understand and expand on the crucial role they play in education. The Web site (www.handinhand.org) includes a "chalkboard" with tips on getting the community involved in schools. For more resources, contact Hand in Hand, 1001 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Suite 310, Washington, DC 20036, 800/953-HAND, Fax 202/872-4050. E-mail: hand@iel.org.

Building Partnerships
"Children: 20 percent of our population, 100 percent of our future." That's the theme of a Web site (www.ed.gov/Family/comunity.html) full of information on increasing family and community involvement in education—info you can copy and use to create your own brochure. For a free paper copy of *An Invitation to Your Community: Building Community Partnerships for Learning*, contact the Family Involvement Partnership for Learning, 600 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, DC 20202-8137.

On Special Education
In *Negotiating the Special Education Maze: A Guide for Parents and Teachers*, three education and legal advocates discuss strategies for designing instruction to meet the needs of an individual student with disabilities. Included is information on the Individuals with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act. 264 pp., $16.95 from Woodbine House. Call 800/843-7323 to order.

You know you have a problem when . . .

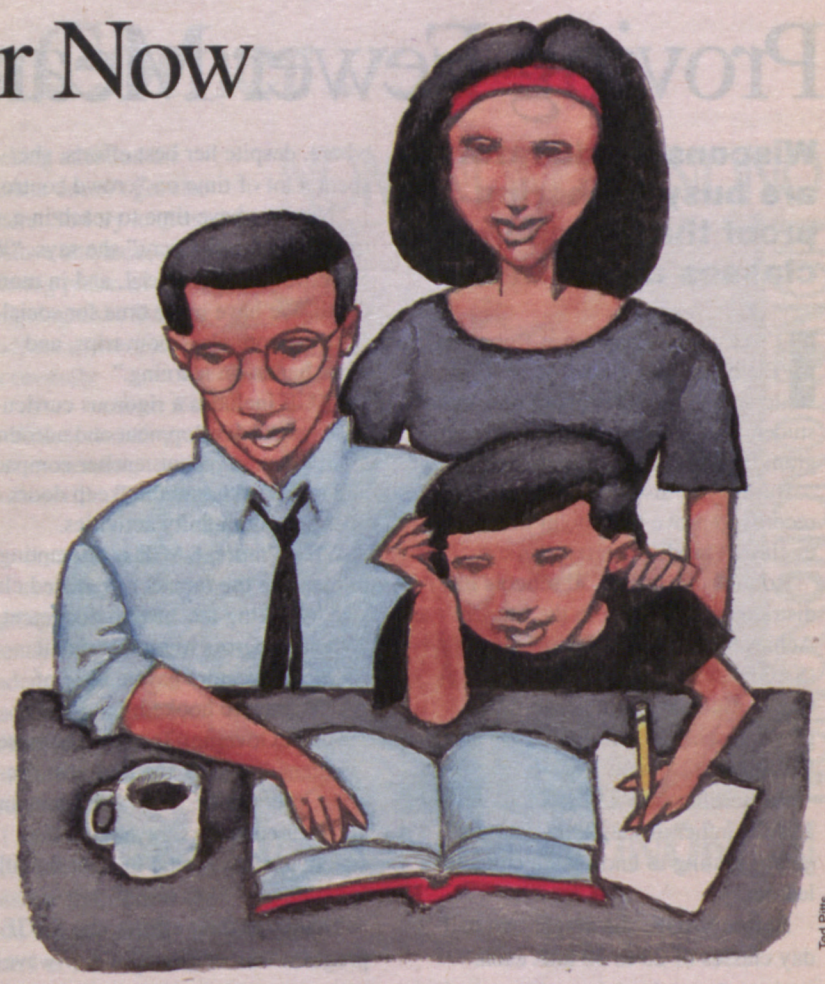
"Voters overwhelmingly elect a board of education member who has no appreciation for public schools."

Carol Kadi, high school world history teacher, Sayreville, New Jersey

Dilemma

All Together Now

How do you make learning a family activity?



Ted Pitts

I ask students to write an autobiography that includes baby photos, pets, homes, vacations, grandparents, and memorable family moments. Parents tell me that creating such a valued document brings the family together.

I also ask parents to write about a time in life when their children were growing into adulthood or becoming their own person. Then I ask the students to write about the first time that they felt they became an adult or first felt independent.

The assignment juxtaposes the two incidents, since a parent's recollection can often be quite different from the student's.

I also ask parents to write their children a letter of tribute or appreciation for all that the children have meant to them—a recollection of an especially poignant moment together or words of advice that have never been expressed.

These letters are kept sealed until the end of the semester. When opened, there's not a dry eye in the class. Some students share their letters and usually say, "I never realized my dad or mom felt that way about me."

Our students who write tributes to their loved ones have frequently had their pieces published in local newspapers on holidays like Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Grandparent's Day. This assignment surely brings the family together and makes parents partners in learning.

Kathryn Megyeri
High school English teacher
Sandy Spring, Maryland

Several times during the year, my students take home festively decorated mystery envelopes with instructions to open them when the family is enjoying a leisurely dinner. The envelopes hold a list of 20 fun dinner conversation ideas geared to encourage all members to participate.

Topics range from the macarena steps or naming prominent people to emerging markets and how they affect our country. Parents enjoy this optional enrichment exercise.

Sandra Goodman
Fourth grade teacher
Livingston, New Jersey

Four times a year, we host a "School Night" where parents and their children spend an evening at school. Together they do lessons and activities, have dinner, and enjoy school together.

Wendy Scott
Fifth grade teacher
Blackfoot, Idaho

Each Monday, I give students in my "Learning for Independence" class a homework packet with math, reading, language arts, and household chores to complete by Friday.

I may ask students to do a complete load of laundry—washing, drying, sorting, and folding. The assignment may be to wash dishes and clean their bedrooms, closet, and drawers.

Parents sign the packet indicating that their child completed the assignment or that they modified or reassigned them other appropriate chores.

These assignments become a weekly family activity where students enjoy learning new tasks, and parents are delighted to have them share household responsibilities.

Lois Dolan
Middle school special ed teacher
Eldersburg, Maryland

Got an Answer?

How do you get parent buy-in on alternative assessment?
Send your answer to *NEA Today* through regular mail, Fax 202/822-7206, or E-mail at **dilemma2@neatoday.org.**

Communities

You know you've been successful when . . .

"A parent walks into a conference 15 minutes late looking terrified—and walks out relaxed and smiling."

Joan Vonder Haar, fourth grade teacher, Pacific, Missouri

Delight

When Families Come on Board

Attendance is up and halls are quieter in Nashville schools that are bringing families into the learning circle.

Ever since nine Nashville schools banded together in a sweeping effort to improve community life, they've seen a nifty payoff—many parents, inspired by their children's success, are coming back to earn their GEDs.

That's just one "ripple effect," says school social worker Gayle Greenfield of the project funded by NEA's Center for the Revitalization of Urban Education.

"The biggest change has been improving the school climate through team building and conflict resolution," she says. "With that has come a rise in student attendance."

The NEA project, now in its third year, involves students, families, and communities from Pearl-Cohn High School and its five elementary and three middle feeder schools.

"We decided to use a cluster of schools, thinking we'd possibly see results better if we could involve the same group of kids," explains Greenfield, chair of the project's oversight committee.

Now, halls are quieter and discipline has improved, thanks to the project's conflict resolution component, which begins in pre-K classes and culminates in a peer mediation program for the older kids.

New this year, "Fighting Fair for Families" builds on student conflict resolution training, Greenfield notes, "so when kids come home with this new language and new way of solving problems, parents can learn it as well and begin to practice it in their neighborhoods."

Each school has picked at least one parent to go through the training, creating a cadre of parents who will teach other parents.

"The good thing about this program is that we'll have parents training other parents, not teachers training parents," says Katrina Thirbenny, the Metropolitan Nashville Education Association Uniserv director coordinating the project.

Making parents feel at home in their children's schools is what Greenfield strives for in her job as director of the McKissack Accelerated Middle School's parent resource center, one of four such centers at cluster schools.

Parents can take their pick of day and evening GED classes, a Dad's Club, parenting and health classes, early childhood programs, and even a Friday sewing class.

"Transportation is an issue in West Nashville, so we try to make it easy for parents to come here to the school and get everything they need," Greenfield says.

To help parents juggle family and school responsibilities, Tennessee Education Association Student members are available to pitch in with child care.

This spring, the project will add MegaSkills training for parents.

Local businesses are getting on board, too. Many are now "Pencil Partners," and Thirbenny hopes to inspire them to increase their participation.

"We want businesses to become involved with the children, instead of just giving money," she says. "We want the students to see role models, truly concerned about working with them and truly concerned about their success."

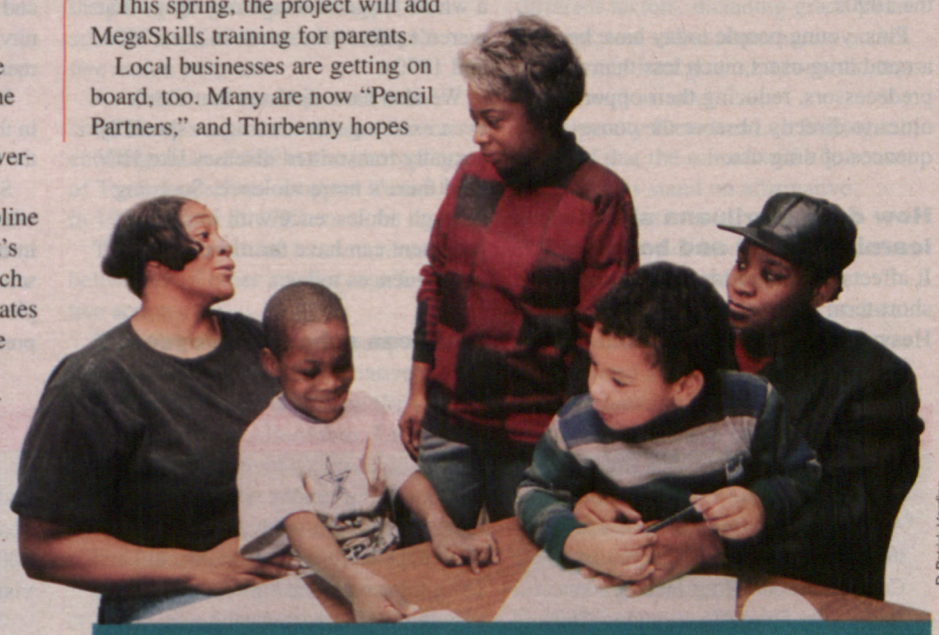
Adds Greenfield: "It takes time. I'm just seeing the puzzle pieces come together this year."

After 12 years at McKissack, Greenfield says she's also starting to see "kids recycled as adults"—those she knew as elementary students are coming back as 21-year-olds, ready to buckle down now and earn that GED.

—Bonnie Gardner

For More Information

Contact Uniserv Director Katrina Thirbenny at 615/726-1499 or Anthony Hernandez of NEA's Center for the Revitalization of Urban Education at 954/340-0243.



D. Patrick Harding

In Nashville, middle school social worker Gayle Greenfield teaches a parenting skills class as part of a program to enlist parents as partners in improving schools.

Idea Exchange

Tee Time for Kids

The September *NEA Today* posed the question, "What do you do when a student's family can't afford an activity?"

My son Doug, a physical education teacher, has addressed this issue for three years.

He solved the problem by organizing a yearly golf tournament to raise funds for middle school students. This past summer, he raised approximately $4,000.

It's a time-consuming task, but he works diligently to make it an enjoyable experience for all participants. As a retired educator, I'm proud of him.

Irene Mable
Buena Vista, Colorado

Family Field Trips

I teach K-2 English-as-a-second-language students. To help ease their adjustment to a new community—and to welcome their families—I have been organizing ESL Family Evening Field Trips.

I contact various local businesses, send invitations, collect RSVPs, and write up short articles for the news media.

We've visited toy and book stores and a cable television center. We've watched a dress rehearsal at a local theater and had a behind-the-scenes tour of a local supermarket.

The enthusiasm, smiles, and friendships that have been fostered by these educational trips are an asset. I'm already making contacts for the next school year.

Hope Blecher Sass
Highland Park, New Jersey

Want More?

Have a great idea? Pass along your tips to *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, Fax 202/822-7201, or E-mail: ideas@neatoday.nea.org.

For more tips, check out NEA's weekly E-mail service, Works4Me. To sign up, send an E-mail to lyris@list.nea.org.

- In the "subject" line, type: sign me up, NEA!
- In the message block, type: subscribe Works4Me
- Send the message.

To submit your own tip, E-mail it to: owner-Works4Me@list.nea.org.

Health

From the Network

The NEA Health Information Network suggests the following helpful resources.

Living with AIDS
The real-life experiences of a person with AIDS can be a powerful tool in bringing the reality of the HIV/AIDS epidemic to young people. *The Face of HIV/AIDS: People with HIV/AIDS as Educators* offers guidance to school employees interested in bringing a person with HIV/AIDS into the classroom as part of a comprehensive AIDS education program. For free copies, call the NEA Health Information Network at 800/718-8387.

Poison Prevention Week
Each year, more than 1.1 million unintentional poisonings among children ages 5 and under are reported to U.S. poison control centers. In 1995, 80 children ages 14 and under were fatally poisoned. Join the National Safe Kids Campaign in observing National Poison Prevention Week, March 15-21. For more information, call 202/662-0600.

Unfamiliar Territory
Surveys show most people are unfamiliar with sexually transmitted diseases, even though as many as one in two Americans will contract one in their lifetime. *Women's Experiences: Talking with Health Professionals about STDs*, a new survey of women ages 18-44, finds these diseases are rarely discussed during routine gynecological and obstetrical visits. For a summary of the survey results, contact the Kaiser Family Foundation at 800/656-4533 (ask for document #1313) or visit the Web at www.kff.org.

Kick Butts Day
Each year 3,000 children become regular smokers. On April 2—Kick Butts Day—help students become advocates against the tobacco industry. For a free activity guide, contact the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, 1707 L St., N.W., Suite 800, Washington, DC 20036, Fax 202/296-5427. On the Web: www.kickbuttsday.org. Let them know that you're an NEA member.

New Battle Against Marijuana

Dr. Lloyd Johnston, program director and senior research scientist at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research, is the principal investigator for the "Monitoring the Future Study," also known as the National High School Senior Survey. Carried out since 1975, this survey polls some 50,000 eighth, 10th, and 12th grade students annually on their alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use.

What percentage of young people currently use marijuana?
Eleven percent of eighth graders have used marijuana in the last 30 days. For 10th graders, it's 20 percent. Among seniors, it's 22 percent.

Starting in the late 1970s, there was a sustained decline in marijuana use for the better part of 13 years. In 1991, use began to rise. Over the last four or five years, this has resulted in a doubling or tripling of rates.

Why this relapse?
Ironically, we were so successful in getting drug use down during the 1980s that the country took its eye off the ball.

In the 1990s, pro-drug lyrics and attitudes re-emerged from many music groups. Coverage of anti-drug advertising from the Partnership for a Drug-Free America declined. Congress let the Drug-Free Schools budget erode by some 40 percent in the first half of the 1990s.

Plus, young people today have been around drug users much less than their predecessors, reducing their opportunities to directly observe the consequences of drug use.

How does marijuana affect learning ability and behavior?
It affects concentration, motivation, short-term memory, and interest level. Heavy marijuana users have told us that they have lost interest in activities—including learning.

Are some students more at risk?
Young people who aren't planning to go to college and aren't as academically invested are considerably more likely to get involved in drugs.

White students are more likely to get involved than African American students.

What should educators do if a young person says, "Your generation smoked pot, so what's wrong with it?"
One response is, "My generation knew much less about marijuana and other drugs. And the marijuana that's out there today is much stronger than what existed then."

You can add that students today are using drugs at a younger age. Now it's not uncommon for young people to begin during junior high school—and evidence shows that the younger people start, the more trouble they get into with drugs.

For the most part, it's only the kids who use marijuana who go on to use other drugs like crack, ice, and PCP—a whole range of dangerous drugs that weren't part of the scene in the 1960s and 1970s.

We also have diseases that didn't even exist a generation ago, especially sexually transmitted diseases like HIV. And there's more violence. So going through adolescence with impaired judgment can have far more serious consequences today.

What can school employees and public schools do to help stem the use of marijuana?
A number of things:

- School policies need to be clear, consistently enforced, fair, and appropriate.
- School employees need to identify kids who seem to be having problems with drugs, engage in outreach efforts, and refer those who are having problems for help.
- Any drug curriculum that's adopted should have passed rigorous evaluation for effectiveness. Many programs out there simple aren't working.
- The National Commission for Drug-Free Schools has issued a report (see Resources) that I'd advocate for every school system. It discusses establishing a task force of students, teachers, parents, and relevant people in the larger community such as law enforcement, the treatment community, and social services.

It's important to engage young people in the solution and not just view them as the problem.

Schools need to reach young people who may use marijuana—bring them into the fold so they do not experience school as a failure. Engaging young people is one of the most important drug prevention activities we can do.

Resources

- *Toward a Drug-Free Generation: A Nation's Responsibility* provides the final report of the National Commission on Drug-Free Schools. *Preventing Drug Abuse among Children and Adolescents: A Research-Based Guide* includes information from the National Institute on Drug Abuse on adopting an effective curriculum. For a catalog with these and other government publications, call the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at 800/729-6686, or visit the Web at www.health.org.

- The National Council on Alcoholism and Other Drug Dependence provides information on young people and drug and alcohol use. For a publications catalog, contact NCADD at 800/622-2255 or 800/475-4673, or visit the Web at www.ncadd.org.

- The federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration provides information on the Web at www.samhsa.gov.

Rights Watch

Diversity Fades on Campus

Recent assaults on affirmative action in student admissions policies are changing the face of America's colleges.

Legal attacks on the affirmative action admissions policies of colleges and universities have already had a chilling effect on the diversity of student bodies.

The numbers speak for themselves. The new first-year class at the University of California's law school has exactly one African-American student.

But that's better than the first-year class at UC San Diego's medical school.

It has none.

These chilling figures pierce any rhetorical debate over affirmative action policies in university admissions. The numbers illustrate the heavy impact that the abolition of these policies has had on opportunities for minority students.

And what's happening now is just the beginning. Spurred on by recent court decisions in Texas and California, those interested in dismantling affirmative action programs in higher education student admissions have expanded their efforts to other states.

Supporters of affirmative action have pointed out that college admissions have never been based on grade-point averages and test scores alone. Schools routinely make exceptions for jocks, the children of big donors and alumni, and friends of power brokers.

So why shouldn't these same schools be allowed to make exceptions for minority students? Certainly, affirmative action supporters have argued, a school's desire to have a racially diverse student body and to remedy past discrimination is just as legitimate and as legal as keeping the sports boosters and VIPs happy.

Some courts have answered "no"—arguing that although the Constitution doesn't prohibit discrimination based on wealth or political connections, it does prohibit discrimination based on race.

The leading case on this issue is *Hopwood* v. *State of Texas*, a 1996 decision by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.

In this decision, the court struck down an affirmative action plan at the University of Texas Law School that admitted some African-American and Mexican-American students with lower grade-point averages and Law School Admission Test scores than white applicants who were not admitted.

The law school argued that its policy was justified by the school's interest in creating a diverse student body and remedying "decades of educational discrimination" against minorities both by the law school itself and by Texas public schools.

The court held that "diversity" is not a legally sufficient justification for affirmative action in student admissions.

The court also concluded that although the law school once practiced *de jure* discrimination against African Americans, that ended in 1950, and neither that prior discrimination nor the past segregation of Texas public schools justified the present affirmative action program.

As a result of the *Hopwood* decision, Black student enrollment for the entering class of 500 at the University of Texas law school dropped from 31 in 1996 to four in 1997.

The *Hopwood* case has served as a bellwether of other attacks on affirmative action.

- In 1996, California voters passed Proposition 209, a ballot initiative banning affirmative action by the state, including college admissions. Last fall, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the legality of Prop 209, and the U.S. Supreme Court refused to review that decision.
- In Washington State, opponents of affirmative action are trying to put a Proposition 209-type initiative on the ballot for 1998.
- The latest assault occurred last fall when the University of Michigan's affirmative action admissions plans for both its undergraduate program and law school became the target of two lawsuits. Both were filed by the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Individual Rights, which brought the *Hopwood* case and served as the legal force behind Proposition 209 in California.

The two class action lawsuits claim that the university maintains a "dual admissions system" that utilizes different criteria for minorities and nonminorities.

University of Michigan officials flatly deny the charge. They claim that admissions are based on a number of different factors, including grade-point average, test scores, community activities, family background, economic status, as well as race.

University President Lee Bollinger has said that the school will vigorously defend its stand on affirmative action in court.

"The virtues of having diversity on our campuses should be clear by now," Bollinger has noted. "If we lose our ability to create that, we will move back toward a resegregated system of higher education."

Decisions in these cases are more than a year away, and appeals likely will follow.

Meanwhile, the University of California Board of Regents recently rejected a proposal that would have banned preferential admissions for the children of the rich, the famous, and the well-connected.

—Michael D. Simpson
NEA Office of General Counsel

Is Affirmative Action Still Legal?

Do the Texas and California cases (see main story) mean that it's now illegal for colleges and universities to adopt affirmative action student admissions plans?

Not at all.

In fact, the U.S. Department of Education has taken the position that, outside the Fifth Circuit (Texas, Mississippi, and Louisiana) where the *Hopwood* case is controlling, schools still can consider race in student admissions to achieve a diverse student body.

The Education Department maintains that this kind of affirmative action is legal under the Supreme Court's 1978 decision *Regents of California* v. *Bakke*. In that case, the Court said that although a public medical school could not set aside a fixed number of slots—a quota—for minority students, it could use the applicant's minority race as a "plus" factor in making admissions decisions.

In policies adopted soon after *Bakke* and in public statements issued after *Hopwood*, the Education Department's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has consistently maintained that *Bakke* is still the law of the land and that schools can use affirmative action to promote campus diversity.

OCR head Norma Cantu recently said the *Hopwood* case was wrongly decided. Education Department General Counsel Judith Winston has sent an "open letter" to college and university attorneys reaffirming the department's position that "it is permissible in appropriate circumstances for colleges and universities to consider race in making admissions decisions . . . to promote diversity of their student body."

Last summer, the Education Department launched an investigation into whether the University of California's ban on affirmative action in admissions to its three state law schools violates federal law because it "results in substantial exclusion of qualified minority applicants."

Meanwhile, Texas has taken steps to try to avoid the harsh results of the *Hopwood* decision. Beginning in the fall of 1998, students in the top 10 percent of their high school graduating class will be admitted to Texas public universities, regardless of their test scores.

Bits & Bytes

Bytes for Beginners

I want to design and develop a Web page for my school, but I don't know where to start. How can I learn to do it—without spending a lot on training or software?

You're in luck. There's a vast array of resources—in print and online—that'll teach you how to develop and design Web pages. Here are five favorites:

- WebTeacher has an entire section devoted to helping educators and students create their own homepages. An online tutorial walks you through Web page creation, including how to import images and sounds, how to create links to other Web sites, and how to use HTML, Java, and CGI scripts. Go to www.webteacher.org/macnet/indextc.html.
- Besides basic Web page design advice, the Loogootee Elementary West's Web site is packed with useful classroom resources and Web links. Check out the Six Steps for Web Design at www.siec.k12.in.us/~west/online/steps.htm, where you'll learn how to gather information, determine your audience, create a storyboard, plan navigational tools, and develop a great-looking Web page.
- School Home Page Building Blocks, at www.learningspace.org/content, covers Web site purpose, content, design, organization, and resources.
- Designing School Web Sites to Deliver, at www.fromnowon.org/webdesign.html, explores reasons for schools to launch Web sites, as well as copyright and other legal issues.
- One of the best books on creating and managing Web sites wasn't written specifically for schools, but don't let that stop you. *Web Site Management Excellence* by Linda Brigman (Que Education & Training, $29.99) is a no-hype, easy-to-understand guide—and a must-read for anyone considering building a Web site.

Have ideas, comments, or questions about technology? You can E-mail webeditor@dear.nea.org or write to Dear Webeditor, NEA Center for Education Technology, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Check out www.nea.org/cet on the Web for more Q&As.

Friendly User

Finding Freebies on the Net

Brian Hendrickson

Using free software that he found on the Internet, Oregon teacher Kevin Crotchett helps his students animate their drawings. The animation program is just one free treasure Crotchett has downloaded for his class.

Who: Kevin Crotchett, seventh grade teacher, Jackson Middle School, Portland, Oregon

E-Mail: kevcro@teleport.com

What: The Internet is a great source for free or almost free software, says Crotchett—if you know where to look.

Inspiration: Like kids everywhere, the students in Crotchett's seventh grade class like to illustrate their creative writing assignments. Since they publish their stories on the class's Web site, they've become adept at creating gifs, the graphic image files used on the Internet.

When Crotchett wanted to help his kids animate their creations, he turned to the Internet, as he often does, for free or cheap software.

"I found two freeware programs—Gif Builder for the Mac and Microsoft's Gif Animator for the PC—that compile images together, working on the same principle as a cartoon flip book," says Crotchett, author of *A Teacher's Project Guide to the Internet* (Heinemann, $26.50).

"With a paintbrush program, the kids create a picture of their story's main character, save it to a file, slightly alter that file, save the alteration as a separate file, and so on," he says. "The average kid does about eight files. Using the animation program, they then load pictures into the program in sequence. The result is an animated gif that can be used on the Net."

Lesson: Crotchett's students are learning to master many computer applications, thanks to his skill as a software bargain hunter.

"I download a lot of software for the class. It's amazing how much software is free," he says. "And a lot of the shareware programs can be real cheap, like $10."

His favorite sources are ZDNet and Download.com, which feature archives full of downloadable software. Crotchett recommends these two Web sites because they clearly state which programs are freeware—that is, free software for the taking—and which are shareware, which you may download and use free for 30 days, and then buy if you want to continue using it.

Shareware is generally far less expensive than commercial software—the basic "paintbrush" program that Crotchett's students use to create their illustrations was a shareware bargain at $8.

To design and develop the school's Web site, Crotchett's class uses Netscape Composer "because it's free."

"Netscape has an educational agreement," he explains. "All you have to do when you're downloading the program from the Netscape Web site [www.netscape.com] is to check off that you're an educator."

Composer, Crotchett points out, works similarly to a word processor.

"By seventh grade," he notes, "most kids are already familiar with word processing."

Crotchett's teaching his students to be software scavengers as well.

"They choose a subject and a grade level, and then they have to go out on the Internet and find appropriate shareware, such as math games for second graders," he explains. "They have to play around with the game, analyze it, and critique it."

Of course, once you download software, you have to learn how to use it. That's a snap, says Crotchett. "The way I learn a program is either through the online help, or I give it to the kids—they'll sit down with it for 30 or 40 minutes, and then they'll teach me."

Click: Crotchett cautions that, while freebies are plentiful on the Internet, "You have to hunt for the software. You can't expect to go to ZDNet and find it right away. You have to be persistent. Just know that little gems are tucked into these archives.

"Some of the archives have nifty search engines," he adds. "So, the more specific you can be, the quicker you'll find something. I found the two animation programs in about 10 minutes."

For More Information

Go on your own treasure hunt for free software at www.ZDNet.com or www.download.com. To visit Crotchett's classroom, point your browser to www.teleport.com/~kevcro.

Click Here

Get Your E-Rate Now

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 included provisions to ensure that schools and libraries would receive telecommunications services at a significantly discounted rate—the E-rate.

Past "Bits & Bytes" columns have described the overall system for discounts in some detail, but to recap: Schools are entitled to discounts, from 20 to 90 percent, based on the number of students eligible for free or discounted lunch, as well as some adjustments for rural areas.

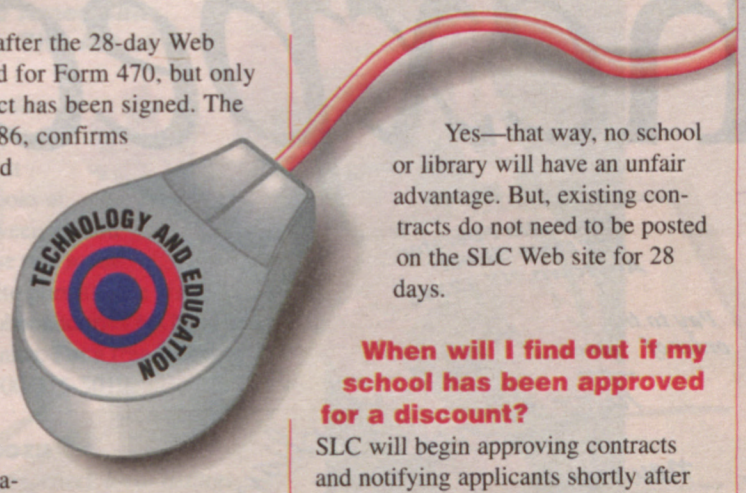
The program rolls out this winter, and schools must file the proper forms and prepare a technology plan to qualify for discounts.

The following answers to frequently asked questions are from the Schools and Libraries Corporation (SLC), which oversees the E-Rate program.

How does my school apply for the E-rate?

All eligible applicants must submit three separate forms to SLC in sequential order.

The first, Form 470, describes the services that the school intends to purchase. SLC will post this request for services on its Web site for 28 days. The second, Form 471, details the services for which a contract has been signed. Schools may file Form 471 anytime after the 28-day Web posting period for Form 470, but only after a contract has been signed. The third, Form 486, confirms that contracted services have begun and that your school's technology plan has been approved.



SLC has mailed applications and instructions to every school district, library, and independent school, as well as posted the materials on the SLC Web site.

When do the forms need to be returned to SLC?

During an initial filing window, all applications will be treated as if they arrived on the same day. The window will close 75 days from the date the SLC Web site became active in mid-January—Forms 470 and 471 must be received by then.

Applications received after the window closes will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis.

Are existing contracts subject to the 75-day window?

Yes—that way, no school or library will have an unfair advantage. But, existing contracts do not need to be posted on the SLC Web site for 28 days.

When will I find out if my school has been approved for a discount?

SLC will begin approving contracts and notifying applicants shortly after the 75-day window has closed.

Discounts will be retroactive to the contract start date for new contracts, or January 1, 1998 for qualified existing contracts, whichever comes later.

Because of challenges pending before the Federal Communications Commission, you cannot assume that everything you have contracted for will be eligible for discounts. Exercise caution in signing a contract and include appropriate conditions and contingencies.

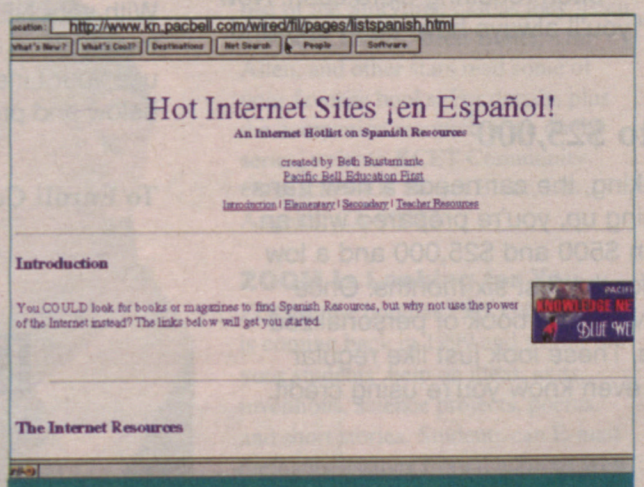
For More Information

SLC will provide a toll-free number and online services to handle questions. Check the Web site for details at www.slcfund.org.

Screen Shots

http://www.eratehotline.org
e-rate hotline
Helping Schools and Libraries Access Telecommunications Services
A Project of EdLinc
e-rate hotline, how can I help you?
That's what you'll hear when you call the E-rate hotline by phone.
Online, it's the same deal: you've got questions about the E-rate, or "education rate", and we've got answers which will help schools and libraries access benefits of as much as 90% in discounts for telecommunications services.
Please send all comments or suggestions regarding this site to
webmaster@eratehotline.org.

www.eratehotline.org
The E-rate Hotline is an online database of questions and answers about the new education rate for telecommunications. Find out how to apply for the E-rate, which discounts are available for your school, and which services are covered.


http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/fil/pages/listspanish.html
Hot Internet Sites ¡en Español!
An Internet Hotlist on Spanish Resources
created by Beth Rustamanie
Pacific Bell Education First
Introduction | Elementary | Secondary | Teacher Resources
Introduction
You COULD look for books or magazines to find Spanish Resources, but why not use the power of the Internet instead? The links below will get you started.
The Internet Resources

www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/fil/pages/listspanish.html
Hot Internet Sites En Español is a comprehensive directory of links for elementary and secondary Spanish language classes. The site also provides links to general curricular resources for educators.

New & Noteworthy

Display Your Work at NEA
Have an innovative use of technology at your school? NEA is looking for good examples to feature in its interactive Teaching and Learning Technology Exhibit, which will be on display in the lobby of the headquarters building. Send staff your suggestions by filling out the form at www.osc.on.ca/nea/.

Free E-Mail
Lightspan ED-MAIL gives you free, permanent, and secure access to E-mail anywhere that you can connect to the Web. Unique education features make the service great for your students and the classroom too. Learn more and sign up at www.edmail.com.

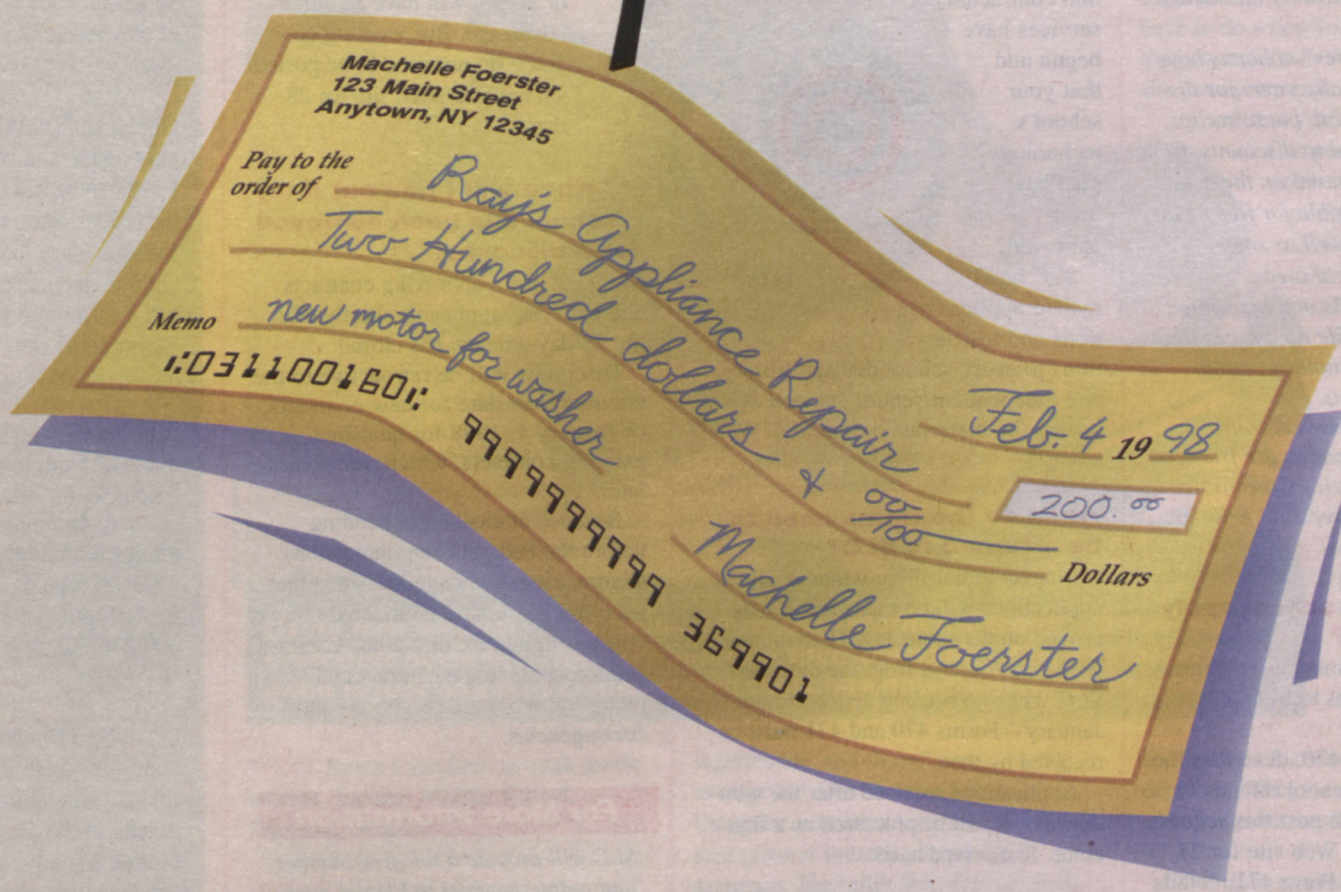
Computer Resource
"The Journey Inside the Computer," a free kit from Intel, is full of resources for teaching science, math, or computers to students in grades 5 through 9. The kit includes a teacher's guide, videotapes, and a poster. To request your kit, call 800/346-3029.

Your Stories, Please
Classroom Connect is looking for short stories (500-1,000 words) on how educators are using technology in the classroom. Selected stories will be published in a monthly online product. E-mail your submissions to dbolin@classroom.net.

Future Entrepreneurs
Enroll your students in MoneyMaking 101. This new software provides the information and tools students need to start and manage their own business. The software ($29.95, call 800/775-4232, ext. 343) also refers students to the MoneyMaking 101 Web site at www.money101.com, where they can communicate with mentors.

Web Design for Students
Let students create their own Web pages with FreeZone's Home Page Constructor at freezone.com/hpc. The constructor is appropriate for beginners as well as for those who are knowledgeable enough to use an HTML editor. Students who follow FreeZone's Code of Conduct when developing their pages may store them on FreeZone's site, where other students and Web visitors can view their work.

Expect the unexpected



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Heads Up!

TV Tips

Eyewitness

PBS, Thursday, February 12, 8-9 p.m. ET. This award-winning series returns with new episodes every Thursday night. Focusing on sight, this episode looks at the world through the eyes of various creatures.

Motown

ABC, Sunday-Monday, February 15-16, 9-11 p.m. ET. This documentary will take a two-night, four-hour look at the history, music, and artists of Motown. For a study guide produced by KIDSNET, call 800/647-4ABC.

Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood

PBS, Monday-Friday, February 16-20, 7:30-8 a.m. ET. To celebrate the show's 30th anniversary, Fred Rogers gives viewers a week of new programs with the theme "Giving and Receiving." As part of the week, Rogers will launch the "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood Sweater Drive," a clothing drive for children and adults. Contact your local PBS station to participate.

The American Experience: Presidents' Week

PBS, February 16-21, 23-24, check local listings for times. This special series presents segments on John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, and Richard Nixon, and culminates with a new documentary on Ronald Reagan.

Scientific American Frontiers: The Art of Science

PBS, Wednesday, February 18, 8-9 p.m. ET. Host Alan Alda looks at the link between art and science, these two seemingly opposite pursuits. He visits a painting robot and tries his hand at a glass harmonica. For a free teaching guide, call 800/315-5010.

Elmopalooza

ABC, February, check local listings for date, time. In this one-hour special celebrating Sesame Street's 30th anniversary, the regular cast hosts a gala of stars, including Rosie O'Donnell, Gloria Estefan, and Lyle Lovett. For a study guide produced by KIDSNET, call 800/647-4ABC.

Biography

Arts & Entertainment Network, Monday-Friday, 8-9 p.m. ET. This signature series continues with inspiring biographies, from William Shakespeare to William Clinton. A teacher's manual for grades 6-12 is available from A&E. Call 212/210-1338 or Fax 212/210-1429.

Guten Tag

Knowledge TV, Tuesdays, 4:30-5 p.m. ET. This half-hour program introduces students and adults to the basics of the German language and to Germany itself. Contact Knowledge TV at 303/792-3111 for off-air taping rights.

Popular Mechanics for Kids

Syndicated, check local listings for date and time. This half-hour magazine series for kids explores science and technology, as two teenage hosts go on location to satisfy their curiosity.

Schickele Mix

Public Radio International, check local listings for date and time. In this weekly hour-long radio series, composer and humorist Peter Schickele makes it fun to learn about classical, jazz, folk, and other musical forms.

Storytime

PBS, check local listings for dates, times. Join Kino, Mara, Lucy, and the rest of the Storytime cast as they listen to Ruben Blades, Brett Butler, Tim Allen, and other stars read some of your favorite books. For details, plus the companion resource book on the series, write to KCET Community Outreach, 4401 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90027.

ZOOM Is Looking for You

ZOOM, the popular PBS kids' series, is coming back in 1999 and would like your students' help on ideas, skits, inventions, science projects, poems, and short stories. Students can E-mail their submissions from the Zoom Web site at www.wgbh.org/zoom.

Many of these listings were provided by KIDSNET, a national computerized clearinghouse for electronic media. For additional listings and information, check the KIDSNET Web site at www.familyeducation.com/kidsnet.asp.

school stories

Want to know what's really happening inside America's schools? *School Stories*, produced by NEA and The Learning Channel, tackles the tough issues on and off campus and offers lessons of hope. Here's the schedule:

Computers: Hype or Hope?

Sunday, February 8, 9 a.m. ET. Is all the effort and expense of wiring classrooms and schools to the Internet worth the effort? *School Stories* travels to Princeton, New Jersey, for some answers.

Saving City Schools

Sunday, February 15, 9 a.m. ET. Can the nation's worst schools recover? A look at how Chicago schools are turning the corner—as parents, teachers, administrators, and community leaders take charge.

Space Camp Challenge

Sunday, February 22, 9 a.m. ET. At Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama, 16 Michigan special education students reach for the stars, showing that higher expectations can work wonders for all kids.

The Drive To Teach

Sunday, March 1, 9 a.m. ET. This program features an innovative professional development plan in Savannah, Georgia that helps education support staffers who want to teach pursue their education. The program recently won a $100,000 grant to expand its efforts.

Class Act: A Teacher Profile

Sunday, March 8, 9 a.m. ET. Spend some time with Rhode Island teacher Mary Lee Douin, who uses her singing and theatrical talent to fire up her students' passion for literature.

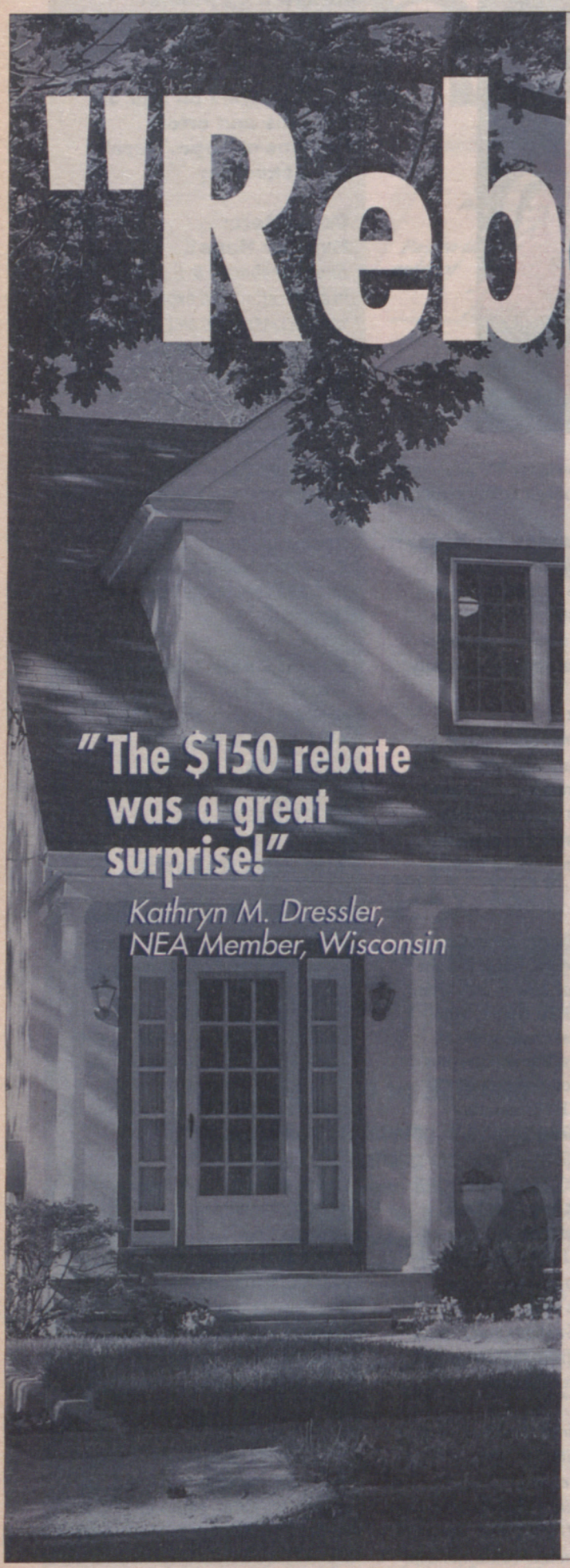
BONUS: An added plus for NEA members: Each episode of *School Stories* is available on video after airing. For details or to order tapes, call the NEA Professional Library at 800/229-4200. In addition, educators have permission to tape the shows for future educational use.

Heads Up

Free or Inexpensive

Integrating Technology

From the creator of Star Wars comes an engaging documentary film and resource book about technology and the classroom. *Learn & Live*, hosted by comedian Robin Williams, highlights innovative schools and programs around the country. $20 includes s&h for the full kit with resource guide (California residents add $1.65 sales tax). Contact the George Lucas Educational Foundation, P.O. Box 672, Santa Rosa, CA 95402, 888/475-4371.



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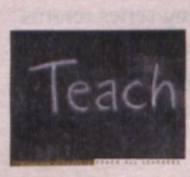
Labor Studies

Want to teach your elementary students about the world of work? The California Federation of Teachers offers *The Yummy Pizza Company: A Labor Studies Curriculum for Elementary Schools*. $3 each, $2 each for orders of 10 or more. Spanish version available on request. Contact the Labor in the Schools Committee, California Federation of Teachers, 1 Kaiser Plaza, #1440, Oakland, CA 94612, 510/832-8812. On the Web: www.cft.org.



Teaching Tips

TeachEach: Classroom Strategies to Reach All Learners is a booklet explaining the innovative classroom practices of the five 1997 TeachEach Honorees selected by the Charles & Helen Schwab Foundation for excellence in teaching. Free. Call 800/471-9545. On the Web: www.perc.schwabfdn.org.

Eco-Education

The World Resources Institute has just published *Exploring Sustainable Communities*, another in its series of *Teacher's Guides to World Resources*, which focuses on worldwide trends in urban development. $8.90 plus $3.50 s&h from WRI Publications, P.O. Box 4852, Hampden Station, Baltimore, MD 21211, Fax 410/516-6998.

Elementary EcoJournals

A Kid's Spring EcoJournal is one of a series of four books by Toni Albert. Packed with hands-on activities to explore the spring season, it makes writing exciting. $9.95 for each book, $2.50 s&h for the first book, $.50 for each additional book. For more information, call Trickle Creek Books at 800/353-2791.

White House

Get a kids' eye view of the President's home with *A Kid's Guide to the White House* by Betty Debnam and the White House Historical Association. The guide includes little known facts and rare photographs. $8.95 plus $2 s&h. Contact Andrews McMeel Publishing, P.O. Box 419242, Kansas City, MO 64141, 800/642-6480.

Heads Up

Flag Facts

Interested in the history of our nation's flag? United States Flag Education, Inc., offers *Honor Our United States Flag through Knowledge*. A teacher's book, student's book, and certificate of participation are available. $3 plus $1.50 s&h for each book. $78 plus $4 s&h for a teacher's book, 25 student's books, and 25 certificates. Contact United States Flag Education, Inc., c/o Otha E. McGill, 901 D St., Rupert, ID 83350, 208/436-6532.

Free Poster Set

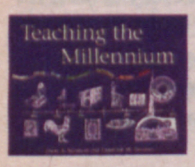
Looking to decorate your classroom and teach tolerance at the same time? *Teaching Tolerance* magazine offers eight color posters on the themes of world peace and tolerance. The free set includes a 12-page teacher's guide for elementary and secondary levels. Send your request on school letterhead to Teaching Tolerance, 400 Washington, Ave., Montgomery, AL 36104. For more, go to www.splcenter.org.

Geography

Geography Wizardry for Kids, by Margaret Kenda and Phyllis S. Williams, is a fact- and fun-filled guide to maps, games, crafts, and experiments—all with geography as the principal theme. $14.95 plus $4.95 s&h from Barron's, 250 Wireless Blvd. Hauppauge, NY 11788, 800/645-3476.

Science Fair Projects

If your students are interested in astronomy, flight, and outer space, here's a resource for you. *Science Fair Projects: Flight, Space & Astronomy* suggests a host of activities, all done with items found around the house. $16.95 plus $3 s&h. Contact Sterling Publishing, Inc., 387 Park Ave. South, New York, NY 10016, 800/367-9693.



Teaching the Millennium

The countdown to the 21st century has begun. Prepare your students for tomorrow by helping them examine the past century and its link to the next one with *Teaching the Millennium* by Craig Munsart and Christine Izmirian. $17.95 plus $4 s&h. Contact Fulcrum Publishing, 350 Indiana St., Suite 350, Golden, CO 80401-5093, 800/992-2908.

Kindness to Animals

KIND (Kids in Nature's Defense) *News* is the award-winning classroom

newspaper that teaches students the importance of kindness and respect toward people, animals, and the earth. A $20 subscription includes 32 copies each month, September through May, a teaching guide with each issue, and *KIND Teacher* magazine. Contact KIND News, P.O. Box 362, East Haddam, CT 06423-0362, 860/434-8666.

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Heads Up

Grants

Sports

NIKE is looking for programs that teach kids life skills through sports and recreation activities. Last year, the Nike Participate in the Lives of America's Youth (PLAY) Foundation gave $2.2 million in grants.

Programs aimed at disadvantaged and minority youth will receive special consideration. Schools, school districts, and community-based organizations are eligible. Deadline: open.

Contact the Nike PLAY Foundation Public Affairs Dept., Nike Inc., 1 Bowerman Dr., Beaverton, OR 97005, 503/671-6453.

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Inclusion and Student Achievement Does inclusion work? Sometimes. A better question is, "What are the characteristics of classrooms in which students with learning disabilities are succeeding?" This 4 page report succinctly explains the results of three important research studies.

High Student Standards Over 48 states have adopted student standards, but they differ dramatically. This 2 page report lists resources and provides an excellent overview of the student standards issue, exploring "What makes good standards?" and "Do standards get results?"

Technology Brief — Executive Summary To get beyond technology's hype and realize it's potential, we must address some critical issues: limited access, inadequate planning, antiquated school facilities and limited budgets. This 4 page paper summarizes major NEA reports about technology and offers a series of recommendations.

IDEA — Frequently Asked Questions Using US Department of Education materials, this paper clarifies the changes in the Individuals with Disabilities Act passed in 1997. It answers such questions as: "What can a school do when a placement is not working out?" and "What about students with disabilities whose conduct is a serious problem?"

Discipline Strategies "We've come a long way," explain teachers at Chickasha Intermediate. In this 4 page extract, teachers explain how they made the transformation from low achievement to high success providing concrete tips such as: morning schedules, parent shadowing, self-monitoring forms, and traffic-control cards.

NEA Calendar of Events Don't find out about an important NEA event after it's over. Get a listing of upcoming NEA events through July.

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helpfrom.nea.org
Tips and Tools for Better Schools

Visit NEA's newest web area at http://helpfrom.nea.org

Technology

Asanté Technologies, Inc. offers $15,000 worth of Asanté retail networking products to five educational institutions seeking networking solutions. Deadline: March 31. For details on the Great Asanté Networking Grant Program, go to www.asante.com. Winners are notified by mail.

Teaching Excellence

Curriculum Associates, an educational publisher, will award three grants worth $1,500 each to three K-8 teachers for innovative practices involving technology. Winners will be appointed to their Excellence in Teaching Cabinet. Grant applicants should describe how they developed a creative, quality learning environment in a 500- to 750-word essay. Deadline: April 30.

For details, check out www.curriculumassociates.com/cabinet.

Online Resources

America Online, Inc.'s new foundation is offering technology grants to teachers using online resources as part of their curriculum, community organizing efforts, or professional development. The grants are worth up to $7,500 plus assistance, training, and online support. Deadline: March 15.

For more information, contact Jill Stephens, Corporate Outreach Director, America Online, 22000 AOL Way, Dulles, VA 20166, 703/265-1342.

Summer Institute

The National Endowment for the Humanities is offering high school history teachers a summer institute, "Nature Transformed: Imagination and the North American Landscape."

The seminar will take place from June 22 to July 10 in North Carolina. The Center provides participants texts and a stipend that covers meals, lodging, and travel. Deadline: March 1.

Contact the National Humanities Center, P.O. Box 12256, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709, 919/549-0661, E-mail: cwaters@ga.unc.edu.

Contests

Essays on Vegetarianism

The Vegetarian Resource Group is sponsoring its annual essay contest for students ages 18 and under. First prize in each age group is a $50 savings bond. Entrants should write a 2-3 page essay on any aspect of vegetarianism. Deadline: May 1.

Send entries to the Vegetarian Resource Group, P.O. Box 1463, Baltimore, MD 21203, Fax 410/366-8804. Include name, age, address, telephone number, grade, school, and teacher's name.

Heads Up

Stay Sober Essays

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) is holding its 13th annual poster and essay contest for students in grades 1-12. More than $10,000 in prizes will be awarded to students creating posters or essays on the theme "Stand Strong. Stay Sober." Deadline: March 21. Contact MADD, 511 E. John Carpenter Frwy, Suite 700, Irving, TX 75062, 214/637-0372.

Web Winners

Ryan White

If you're looking for information about HIV/AIDS, check out the Ryan White Web site at www.ryanwhite.com. You'll find the story of White's battle with AIDS, plus information on support services and medical research.

Social Studies

Indiana social studies teacher Jim Garland has created a Web site tailor-made for social studies teachers looking for lesson plans and links. Call it up at www.wl.k12.in.us/sstech.

Do Something

Do Something, the youth community organization created by actor Andrew Shue, offers a Web site loaded with stories about community activism, links to community resources, and an online news magazine. Call it up at www.dosomething.org.

Homework Heaven

Homework Heaven is a huge, online, 11,000-link academic research directory designed for students in grades K-college. The links provide access to research and information about hundreds of school subjects. Take a look at www.homeworkheaven.com.

Human Hearts

At this site, you'll find everything you've always wanted to know about the human heart, plus sound, video, and visuals to illustrate heart history and culture. Check it out at http://sln.fi.edu/biosci/heart.html.

Internet Site Launch

The Internet Education Resource Center will host a grand opening in cyberspace February 1-May 15. Educators will find plenty of resource sites, and they'll be able to win prizes through Web site contests and drawings. Call it up at www.ierc.com.

Dinofest

The Academy of Natural Sciences will present Dinofest, "The World's Fair of Dinosaurs" from March 27 to April 26. Students can track the progress of this monumental event on the Web at www.dinofest.org. A special Kid's Section contains fossil worksheets, scavenger hunts, and a place for students to submit their dinosaur-related projects so they can be displayed on the Web site. In addition, curriculum materials will be available. For details, call 888/229-1393 or send E-mail to dinofest@dinofest.org.

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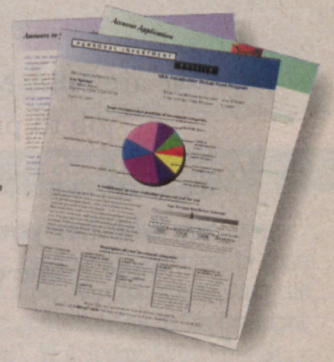

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Where to turn for answers

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In the Light Lane

The Star-Strangled Banner

After explaining the short "e" sound to my first graders, I pointed to a picture of a hen and asked Peter, an avid reader, if this picture had a short "e" sound.

"Yes," he replied.

I asked him to tell the class what was in the picture.

"Chicken," he answered.

Trying to get him to say "hen," since it's easier for the other children to understand, I said, "Yes, chicken does have a short 'e' sound at the end. Can you think of another name for what's in this picture?"

After thinking intensely, he looked up and replied, "A domesticated bird?"

Cynthia Hausamann
Stewartsville, New Jersey

During a social studies lesson, my class reviewed map skills. We discussed the key on the map, and I asked if anyone knew what the star in the circle represented. Students responded that this was the nation's capital, Washington, D.C.

"Who knows what D.C. stands for?" I asked.

One of my anxious students raised his hand and blurted out, "Discovery Channel!"

Thian Nakasone
Honolulu, Hawaii

When I ask my fifth and sixth graders to line up, I always let them go one at a time, after answering a question specific to what we've been studying. Edward, a very funny and charming young man—who's always hungry and will eat anyone's leftovers—answered the first question.

I asked him to name the four seasons.

"Oh, I know," he responded. "Spring, Summer, Winter, Dinner."

Jeannie Berres
Wasilla, Alaska

After several students missed a few days of school due to illness, I wrote "Make-up Test" on the chalkboard and listed the students who would need to take it.

At recess, one girl was overheard saying, "I can't wait to do my make-up test! I know I'll do great, because I've watched my mom put on her make-up!"

Anita Jo Harder
Council Bluffs, Iowa

During our academic practice, students were asked to name our national anthem.

One student answered, "The Star-Strangled Banner."

James Perry, Jr.
Avawam, Kentucky

Recently, one of our volunteer parents came to school with this story about her reaction to our mandated sex education classes.

Her son, Joseph, had called to her from the den saying, "Mom, come quickly. I learned how to make babies today."

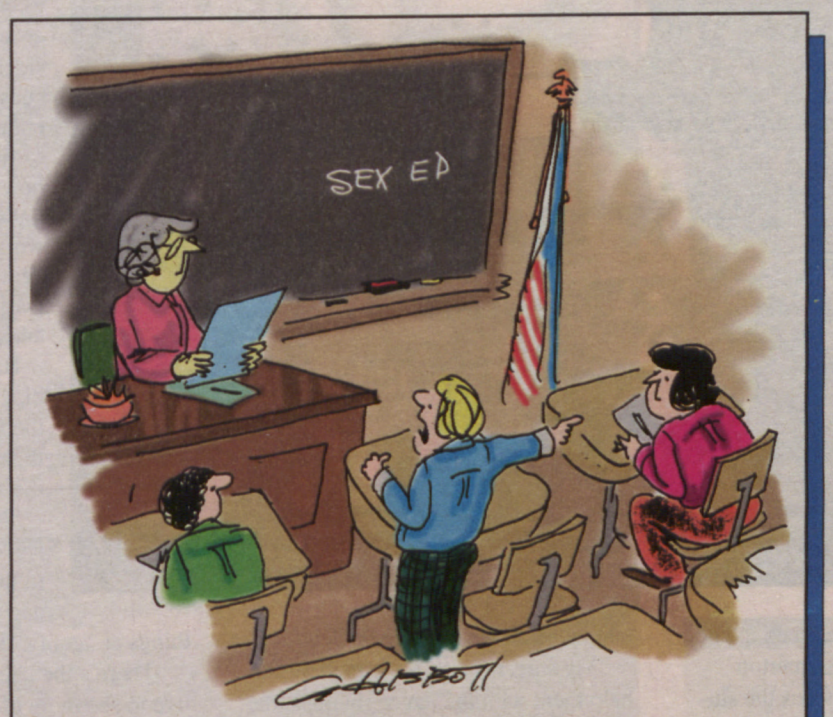
She almost dropped the dishes and had just composed herself when he again called, "Mom, come and see what I learned about making babies."

When she finally arrived, Joseph beamed enthusiastically and said, "See, Mom, you change the 'y' to 'i' and add 'es' to make 'babies'!"

Bobbie Jean Cook Burnett
Russellville, Kentucky

On my way to the copy machine, I found JoAnn, one of our instructional aides, in the hallway sorting the forms that had been filled out at the beginning of the year. The forms asked what language was spoken at home. One reply: "Some good, some bad."

Sue Borders
Colonial Beach, Virginia



"I want to get something straight. Am I the opposite sex or is she?"

My sixth graders were in the process of building the problem 1.6 x 3 with base 10 blocks when my supervisor walked in for an observation.

She immediately noticed a group of children who were apparently impatient with my pacing. Instead of showing three groups of 1.6 on their mat, this group had placed three flats on top of each other and used two rods to make a multiplication sign next to it.

Then they placed a rod to show one, used a cube to represent the decimal point, and used rods to build a six.

When my supervisor burst out laughing in the middle of a serious lesson/observation, I walked over to find "3 x 1.6" staring me in the face.

Horrified, I glanced at my supervisor. "Great, Brooke," she told me with a smile. "They've got it."

The rest of the observation was very positive!

Brooke Whiting-Szajnecki
Alexandria, Virginia

As a special treat to the students in my Spanish class, I showed the video *E.T.* dubbed in Spanish. After it ended, one of my students raised his hand and asked, "I understand everything. But how did they teach E.T. to speak Spanish?"

Alisa Armstrong
Hesperia, California

Spelling Toast

I often remind my senior English classes that poor spelling doesn't mean you're stupid, but it can make you *look* stupid. One senior in particular proved my point.

I gave her a writing prompt that began: "The most attractive person in the world just walked into the room. Describe that person."

She wrote: "The scent of his colon filled the air."

I've used that sentence, without identifying the student, for years. The spelling in my senior classes improves after that example.

Adrienne Mack
Los Angeles, California

I have my students label some of their papers "Spelling Test." One night, as I was grading, I noticed a mistake in one paper's heading.

The next day, I returned the papers. As I handed Levi's back to him, I said, "You must have been very hungry yesterday morning."

A small group of students gathered around as Levi looked at his paper. He smiled and then announced, "I wrote 'Spelling Toast!'"

Eva Blankenship
Marion, Ohio

The word processor can be a great help to students—but, alas, it can't solve all problems.

A recent assignment to evaluate *Dead Poets Society* turned up a sentence that gives new meaning to the story of Mr. Keating and his students:

"At the end, Todd stud on his desk and shouted, 'O Capon, my Caption.'"

Mary Kay Ackermann
Monticello, Iowa

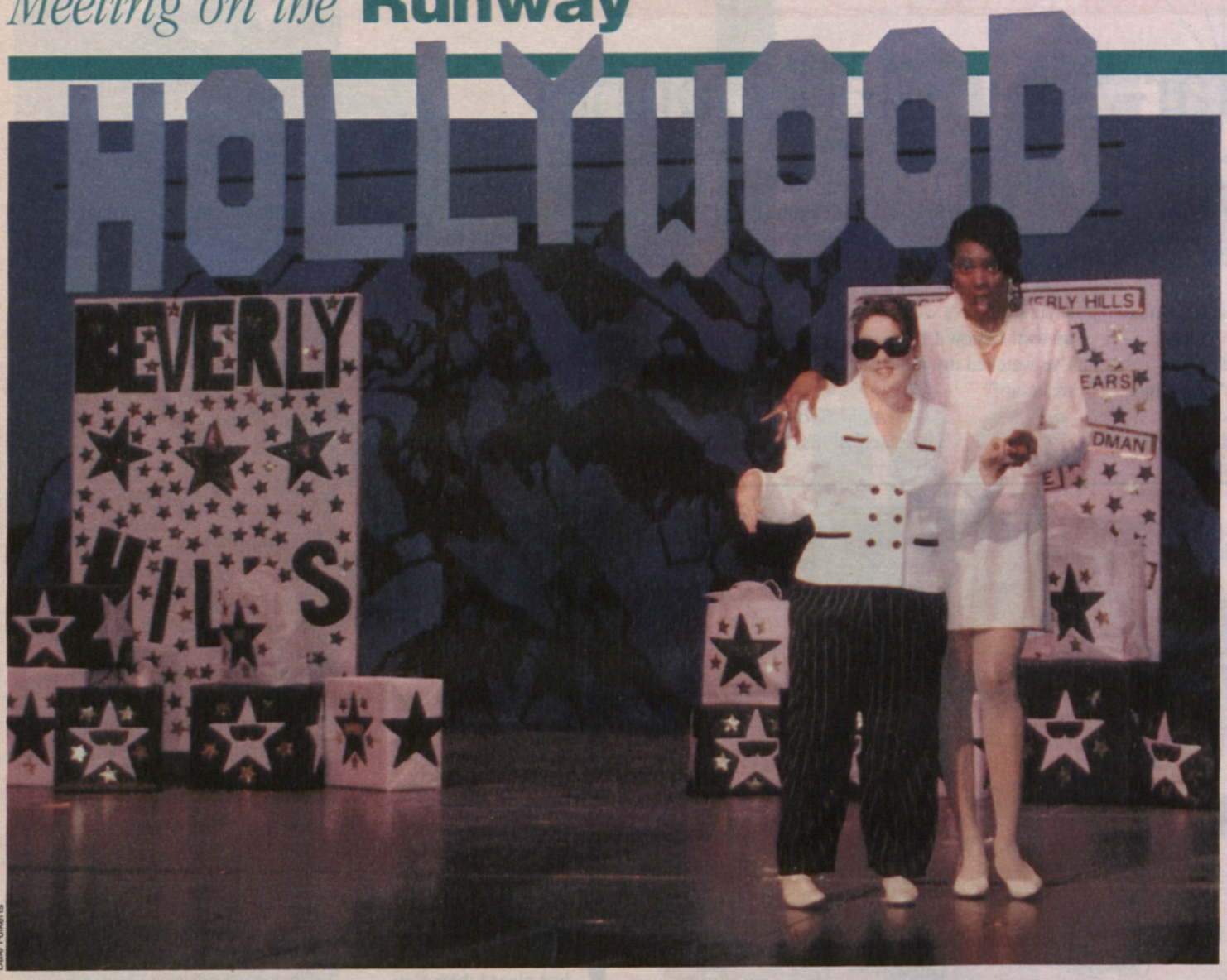
Got Laughs?

Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane," *NEA Today,* 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, Fax 202/822-7206, E-mail NEAToday@nea.org.

Or you can post your contribution—and read more stories—on *NEA Today*'s Web site. Just point your Web browser to **www.nea.org/neatoday** and click on "In the Light Lane."

People

Meeting on the **Runway**



Dale Folkerts

At her annual fashion show, Washington teacher **Madonna Hanna** walks the walk and talks the talk—and brings together students who otherwise might remain worlds apart.

A teacher of fashion marketing and career opportunities at Bremerton High School, Hanna matches the students in her fashion merchandising class with the special-needs students who work as her runway models.

"My students coach the models and help them with the dance routines, the runway walk, and different turns," explains Hanna, who has years of fashion show experience from modeling to management. "I let them figure out the best way to collaborate."

Hanna says that, after working together, the students develop a special bond.

"My students get so proud when their models come out on the runway for the first time," says Hanna, who serves as emcee. "They'll coach them from the sidelines, giving little cues, pointing to their chins, their eyes.

"It's wonderful to see how the kids who initially didn't want to work with disabled students come around and get just as proud," she adds.

Hanna notes the biggest reward is seeing the interaction between the students long after the show ends.

"Now, when these students see each other in the hall, they say hi and talk about how things are going," she says.

"There's the interaction that we'd like to see more of in the world, where everyone realizes that people are people."

Part of His **Nature**

With its salt ponds, tide pools, and coral reefs, the Hawaiian island of Kauai is still one big classroom to retired science teacher **Takeshi Fujita**.

At the start of the school year, he takes the tide calendar and figures out the dates for ideal field trips, which he then sends to area teachers.

Fujita develops environmental curriculum guides for elementary school students and mentors local science teachers.

And every day he continues to use the beauty of Kauai to teach elementary school children about nature, the environment, and life.

"I am a guide," says Fujita, who was recently named Retired Educator of the Year by the American Association of Retired Persons. "I only excite their curious minds. They do the looking and finding."

Fujita takes children to breathtaking island locations, including Salt Pond Beach Park, Koke'e State Park, Kanaloahuluhulu Meadow, and the National Tropical Botanical Gardens.

After a hurricane hit Kauai in 1992, Fujita took students to replant delicate flora on the beaches, clean out the reef areas, and restock the tide pools with rocks and corals.

"I used to take my class on trips," says Fujita. "Now I can take many classes. It is an opportunity to give more children an outdoor experience—science on site."

Ray Tanaka/Photoplant

Todd Harless

Character in Hand

Fascinated by the first puppet show he saw more than 30 years ago, West Virginia teacher **Joe Santoro** created his Wonderment Puppet troop in 1992 and spent a year working with Walt Disney World in Orlando.

Now Santoro, a special education teacher at Berkeley Springs High School, is using the craft of puppetry to stage educational opportunities for his students.

The former drama teacher recently used mini-grant funds to teach basic puppetry to six students.

In 12 weeks, students learned basic script-writing, stage construction, and hand manipulation. Then they gave life to "Jack and the Beanstalk" in a community performance.

"Script-writing teaches students literature and enhances their communications skills," says Santoro. Set construction requires knowledge of math, especially geometry.

"Students learn to create something out of nothing," Santoro notes. "And they learn that they can get into a character, and control and transform it for entertainment.

"It's a master stimulator for any grade level," he adds. "Kids learn and have fun, and it's cheaper than candy."

A Mir Coincidence

During her trip to Russia last summer, Alabama teacher **Jerri Lynn Hollyfield** lined up a pen pal for her students who's out of this world.

Stuck for hours in immigration, Hollyfield struck up a conversation with another Alabaman, who eventually introduced himself as astronaut David Wolf.

"I said, 'Get out of here,' because I didn't believe him," Hollyfield says with a laugh. "He had to show me his passport and patches from his past missions."

Wolf was preparing to take off for the Russian space station *Mir* on September 25, and he invited Hollyfield to have her third graders at McElwain Elementary in Birmingham follow his space adventures.

The students created a project called "Dr. David Wolf Is Out of This World!" They were then given the rare opportunity to E-mail the news of their project to Wolf—while he was stationed on the *Mir*.

Letters have been scrutinized for security clearance by U.S. and Russian officials. And the students have received confirmation that their almost daily notes have made it into orbit.

"We are so excited that we're pioneers into the future," Hollyfield exclaims. "Imagine—your pen pal in space!"

Jeff Roberts

At press time, Hollyfield and her students were headed to Cape Canaveral in Florida, where they've been invited to watch the January liftoff of the shuttle that will retrieve Wolf from the *Mir*.

Million Dollar Look

Alice Emmert spends almost $1 million a year on clothing and accessories—and every item says "Grand Valley State University."

For the past 14 years, Emmert has overseen a staff of 11 student employees and a budget of more than $900,000 as the clothing and accessories buyer for the Michigan university book store.

Emmert meets with countless vendors, peruses magazines, solicits students' opinions—and visits malls to see what kids are wearing.

Margaret Trimer-Hartley

Sometimes students review her choices and say, "Where were you that day, Alice?" Emmert reports.

But by and large, her selections have been popular. Sales have grown, despite head-on competition from top clothing stores.

"I enjoy working with young people," says Emmert. "You really see people at their best when they are shopping."

Money

Decisions, Decisions

Putting Time on Your Side

When it comes to saving for the future, time really is money.

Understanding the relationship between time and money can help you develop an effective saving strategy to meet your long-term financial needs.

Time works its effect on money through compound interest—a phenomenon described by some as a financial miracle. It's easy to see why.

Interest compounds as earnings from your principal are reinvested and then generate earnings on their own. Seemingly by magic, money begets more money, doubling, tripling, quadrupling, and so forth as the years roll by.

Let's say you're just starting out in your career at age 21 and want to retire with a $1 million nest egg at age 65. How much do you have to invest each year?

The answer: just $1,147, assuming a return equal to the 10.2 percent average annual return delivered by common stocks since 1926. This also assumes no current tax on your earnings. (Current tax would not be due if you invested the money in an individual retirement account or a 403(b) or 401(k) savings plan.)

You can harness the power of compounding to help achieve your financial goals. The most important step for you is to give compounding plenty of time to do its work.

In other words, invest early and let your money grow for the long term.

And factor in the impact of taxes. Taxes diminish the power of compounding by substantially reducing your effective rate of return. If you are in the 28 percent tax bracket, you keep just 72 percent of earnings in a taxable account; in the 36 percent bracket, you keep 64 percent.

This means that when you factor in taxes, you require significantly greater investment returns to reach a particular goal.

If you are in the 31 percent tax bracket, for example, you'll need a pre-tax return of 10.1 percent to attain an after-tax return of 7 percent. In the 36 percent tax bracket, you need a 10.9 percent pretax return to be able to keep 7 percent after taxes.

If you can put off paying taxes on investment earnings through tax deferral, you'll find that your money will grow much faster.

Say you are 40 years old and your salary puts you in the 31 percent tax bracket. You have $10,000 to invest for retirement and expect an average annual return of 8 percent. If you invest on a fully taxable basis, your balance will be $38,000 at age 65. With the same return but tax-deferral on your earnings, the balance will be a substantially higher $68,500.

Once you have put your investment strategy in place, time will be your most powerful ally in making it a success. The more years that time can be allowed to work for you, the more likely you'll be to reach your financial goals.

—Mary Rowland

Coming to Terms

When looking for a strategy for saving and investing your money to achieve your financial goals, it's important to understand the interplay between time and money.

These terms can help clarify the power of that relationship:

- **Time value** of money refers to the fact that a dollar received today is worth more than a dollar received at some point in the future. Why? Today's dollar can be invested in the meantime and earn a return.

For example, a dollar in your pocket today will be worth $1.23 three years from now, assuming a 7 percent annual investment return and no taxes or inflation.

- **Rule of 72** shows you how long it will take to double your money depending on the rate of return. When money doubles over a certain time, the product of the number of years and the rate of return per year equals roughly 72.

So if you pick an annual rate of return and divide it into 72, the answer tells you how many years it will take for your money to double.

At 7 percent, for example, your money doubles in roughly 10 years (72 divided by 7). At 9 percent, it takes about eight years (72 divided by 9) for money to double.

How many years will it take to quadruple your money? Take the years required to double your dollars and multiply that times two. At 8 percent, for example, your money will double in nine years—and quadruple in 18.

The Rule of 72 works the other way as well, telling you what interest rate you'll need to double your money in a specific amount of time.

Pick the number of years in which your want your money to double and divide that number into 72. The answer will be your required rate of return. If six years is your target to double your money, then you will need an annual rate of return of about 12 percent.

- **Compound interest** is the interest you earn on the money you invest plus the interest earned on the interest. If you leave your money untouched for a long time, compounding provides the magic that makes it grow.

To make the most of this "secret ingredient," always arrange to have your interest and dividends reinvested so that they, too, can compound.

Worksheet

Lots of worksheets help you project how much money you'll need for retirement. Here's one that shows what you *should have saved* so far.

Select the number of years until you retire from the top row and draw a line down. Select your investment strategy from the side column and draw a line to the right.

Where these two lines meet tells you what percentage of your current income you should have in savings now.

The aggressive strategy assumes a mix of 80 percent invested in stocks and 20 percent in bonds before retirement, and 65 percent in stocks, 35 percent in bonds after retirement.

The moderate strategy assumes a combination of 65 percent in stocks and 35 percent in bonds during working years and 50/50 after retirement.

The conservative strategy assumes a 50/50 split between stocks and bonds during working years and just 35 percent in stocks during retirement.

So let's say you're 20 years from retirement, earn $30,000 a year, and have decided on a moderate investment strategy. According to the chart below, you should now have 268 percent of your current income socked away—or $80,400 (2.68 x $30,000).

Investment Strategy	Years to Retirement							
	0	5	10	15	20	25	30	35
Aggressive	957%	675%	463%	307%	193%	109%	48%	3%
Moderate	1046%	773%	558%	393%	268%	172%	98%	42%
Conservative	1048%	890%	676%	505%	369%	261%	174%	105%

Figures are based on these assumptions:

- That you want to replace 75 percent of your pretax income at retirement and that amount increases with the inflation rate every year.
- That you save 8 percent of your annual income between now and retirement in a pre-tax account and that your incomes grows at the rate of inflation.
- That you will spend 25 years in retirement and use all of the money you have saved at the end of that time period.
- That all distributions are pre-tax.

Source: Steven Norwitz/T. Rowe Price and Associates

Resources

- Look to NEA Member Benefits if you're interested in saving for retirement. You can fund your individual retirement account (IRA) through the NEA Valuebuilder® Mutual Fund Program, the NEA-Sponsored GoldCertificate® CD, or the NEA-Sponsored FDIC-Insured Money Market Account. For more information on the mutual fund program, call NEA Member Benefits at 800/637-4636. For information on current rates for the CD and money market programs, call 800/348-4632.

Eye on Retirement

Which IRA Works Best?

New IRAs offer more ways to build a tidy sum for retirement.

Thanks to new tax rules that went into effect January 1, individual retirement accounts (IRAs) are now more flexible, allowing you to keep the money invested longer—or withdraw the money early without penalty to buy a first home or pay college expenses.

Starting this year, there are three different types of IRAs to choose from: the traditional IRA, the Roth IRA, and the Education IRA.

NEA member John Hinsvark has money in a traditional IRA and contributes the maximum to his 403 (b) account. Now he intends to open a Roth IRA.

"I'm really excited about it," says Hinsvark, a 38-year-old world language teacher at Feaster-Edison Charter School (K-6) in Chula Vista, California. "You invest in a Roth IRA, the money grows tax-deferred, then you get the money tax-free. It's almost too good to be true."

Is he right? Here's how the three IRAs stack up.

■ The traditional IRA lets you deduct a contribution of up to $2,000 from your taxable income. Your earnings accumulate tax-deferred, or you contribute after-tax income. Taxes are due when you take the money out, and withdrawals must start no later than age 70 1/2.

For 1998, the income levels at which the deduction begins to phase out have been raised to $30,000 for singles and $50,000 for married people. The levels will be gradually doubled between now and the year 2007, so many more people will be eligible.

■ The Roth IRA (named after Delaware Senator William V. Roth, Jr.) allows people with adjusted gross income below $150,000 on a joint tax return or $95,000 on an individual return to make a contribution of up to $2,000 per year. Unlike a regular IRA, the contribution is not tax-deductible. Instead, distributions are generally tax-free.

The amount of the contribution can be withdrawn, tax-free and penalty-free, at any time. Earnings can also be withdrawn, tax-free and penalty-free, if you hold the Roth IRA for at least five years and if you're over age 59 1/2, you're taking up to $10,000 to buy a first home, you're disabled, or your heirs collect the IRA after your death.

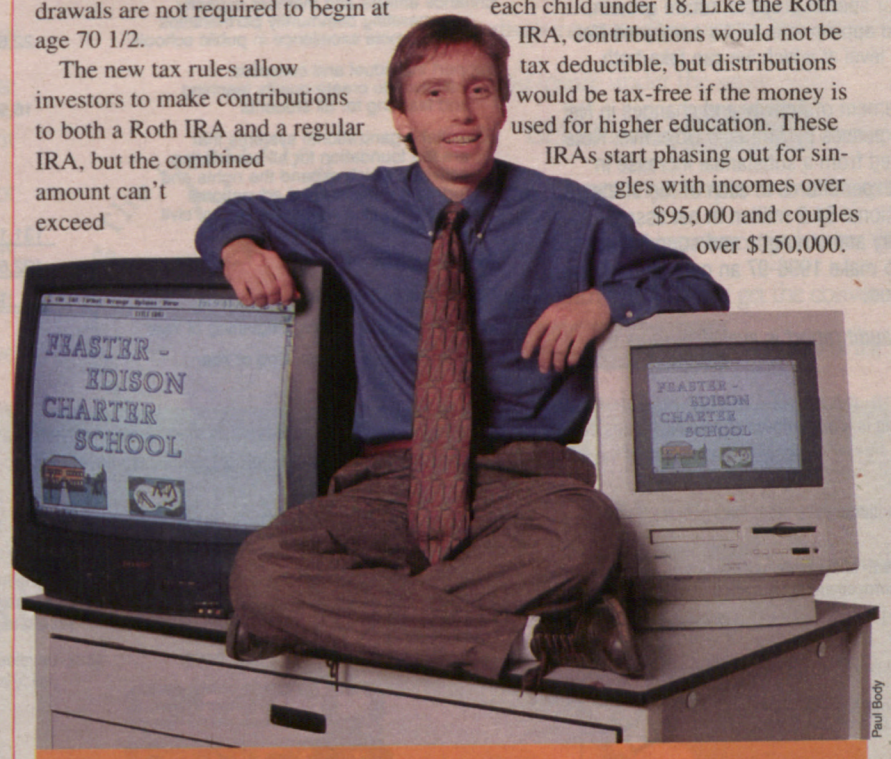
Contributions can be made to a Roth IRA after age 70 1/2, and withdrawals are not required to begin at age 70 1/2.

The new tax rules allow investors to make contributions to both a Roth IRA and a regular IRA, but the combined amount can't exceed $2,000 a year.

Households with adjusted gross income below $100,000 may roll over a regular IRA into a Roth IRA. If you make the switch this year, you can spread the taxes owed on the distribution over a four-year period. If you switch in 1999 or later, taxes will be due all at once.

An analysis from a leading mutual fund company has concluded that it almost always pays to switch money from a regular IRA into a Roth, as long as you move the whole amount and don't take anything out for taxes (it would take years for a Roth IRA to earn that tax money back).

■ The Education IRA allows you to invest an additional $500 per year for each child under 18. Like the Roth IRA, contributions would not be tax deductible, but distributions would be tax-free if the money is used for higher education. These IRAs start phasing out for singles with incomes over $95,000 and couples over $150,000.



Paul Body

Teacher John Hinsvark has weighed the benefits of rolling his existing IRA into a Roth IRA. "I've been frugal," he notes, "so I think I can take the tax hit now."

Educated Investor

Q. I've read that annuities are less attractive after passage of the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997. Should I sell mine?

A. No. One of the biggest mistakes investors make is to jump in and out of investments, incurring big fees and commissions. That is particularly true of annuities, since many of them carry back-end fees that apply only when you sell them.

Q. I understand that I no longer need to keep records on my home improvements because the new tax bills allow homeowners up to $500,000 in capital gains on each home without paying tax. Is that true?

A. The tax bill does, indeed, allow up to $500,000 in capital gains free of tax on a home sale. But you should still keep records. Many homeowners have rolled gains from previous homes into their current home and have already piled up substantial untaxed gains. Keeping careful records of qualified improvements could save tax dollars.

—NEA Member Benefits

Financial Finds

Money Lessons for Kids
Three Web sites for money-minded students: Investing for Kids (ababje.advanced.org/3096), designed for kids by students at a Los Angeles high school, features a stock portfolio game that's been recommended as a tracking tool for high school economics classes. SaveLab (www.plan.ml.com/family/kids), part of the Merrill Lynch home page, encourages kids to save with activity worksheets. The Young Investor Web site (www.younginvestor.com), sponsored by the Stein Roe Young Investor Fund, features a variety of financial games for money-savvy students.

Tax Dollars at Work
Ever wonder where your federal tax dollars go? Now you can find out. At www.ibo.nyc.ny.usnew, a site sponsored by the Independent Budget Office of the City of New York, taxpayers anywhere in the country can see down to the penny how much they "spend" for different federal budget items such as Social Security, Medicare, education, and the environment. You input your tax information, and a receipt is generated showing you where your income taxes go.

Interest in Student Loans
Want to find out what those student loans will really end up costing you or your children? At the USA Group's Web site (www.usagroup.com), a calculator computes the monthly payment and total interest costs on Stafford, SLS, and Plus loans under three repayment plans: level repayment, graduated repayment, and income-sensitive repayment. Other calculators help you figure the cost of deferring interest payments on an unsubsidized Stafford loan during the college years and how much you save by prepaying a student loan.

Get HELP for Certification
Thinking about how to finance your National Board certification exam? NEA members can fund the cost of certification through the NEA Higher Education Loan Program℠ (NEA HELP℠), administered by Nellie Mae. To speak with an experienced loan counselor or to request a loan application, call the NEA HELP℠ Line, 888/4-NEA-HELP (2435), Monday-Friday, from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. ET.

Your Dues Dollars

A Report from NEA Secretary-Treasurer Dennis Van Roekel

As NEA Secretary-Treasurer, I am pleased to report to you figures excerpted from NEA's audited statements for the fiscal and membership year ended August 31, 1997. Once again NEA experienced a positive year in 1996-97!

Not only did we increase membership by adding 43,565 new members to our organization, but we also added $1.2 million to our total Net Assets as a result of net revenues exceeding expenses. This increase together with the 29,000 new members added to our organization last year adds strength to our already fiscally sound organization and enables us to build confidence in public education and to advocate for our members' needs. Each of you should be proud of your contribution in making the NEA strong and responsive to the students we serve and the people who spend their lives in public education.

The auditor's opinion letter stated that their work was performed in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. It was a 'clean opinion' issued without any qualifying comments. An unqualified opinion is the best kind of opinion letter to receive.

The Statements of Financial Position presented the Association's assets, liabilities and net assets as of August 31, 1997. One important indicator of an organization's financial strength is its Current Ratio. This ratio is determined by comparing Current Assets (what we own) with Current Liabilities (what we owe). This ratio should be at least 2:1, that is, $2 of current assets for each $1 of current liabilities. NEA exceeds this criterion with a Current Ratio of 2.15 for fiscal year 1997. Another indicator of financial strength is the Net Assets (the difference between total assets and total liabilities). Net Assets should be a positive balance and sufficient not only to stabilize an organization in troubled times, but also to serve as a source of funds for special projects, future growth, and other fiscal demands as deemed appropriate. NEA's combined Net Asset Balance is over $45 million, a level at which we can take both pride and comfort.

The General Operating Fund Statement of Activity and changes in Net Assets reflects total Revenue and Expenses by Strategic Objective. Note that the increase in revenue generated from a substantial increase in membership allowed for additional expenditures in each of the strategic objectives as well providing an additional $1.2 million in net assets.

Membership growth, fiscal stability and strength, and sound allocation of NEA's resources combined to make 1996-97 an outstanding year for the National Education Association.

Note: A complete copy of the NEA audit report is available upon request.

National Education Association of the United States

Statements of Financial Position By Fund at August 31, 1997
With Comparative totals as of August 31, 1996

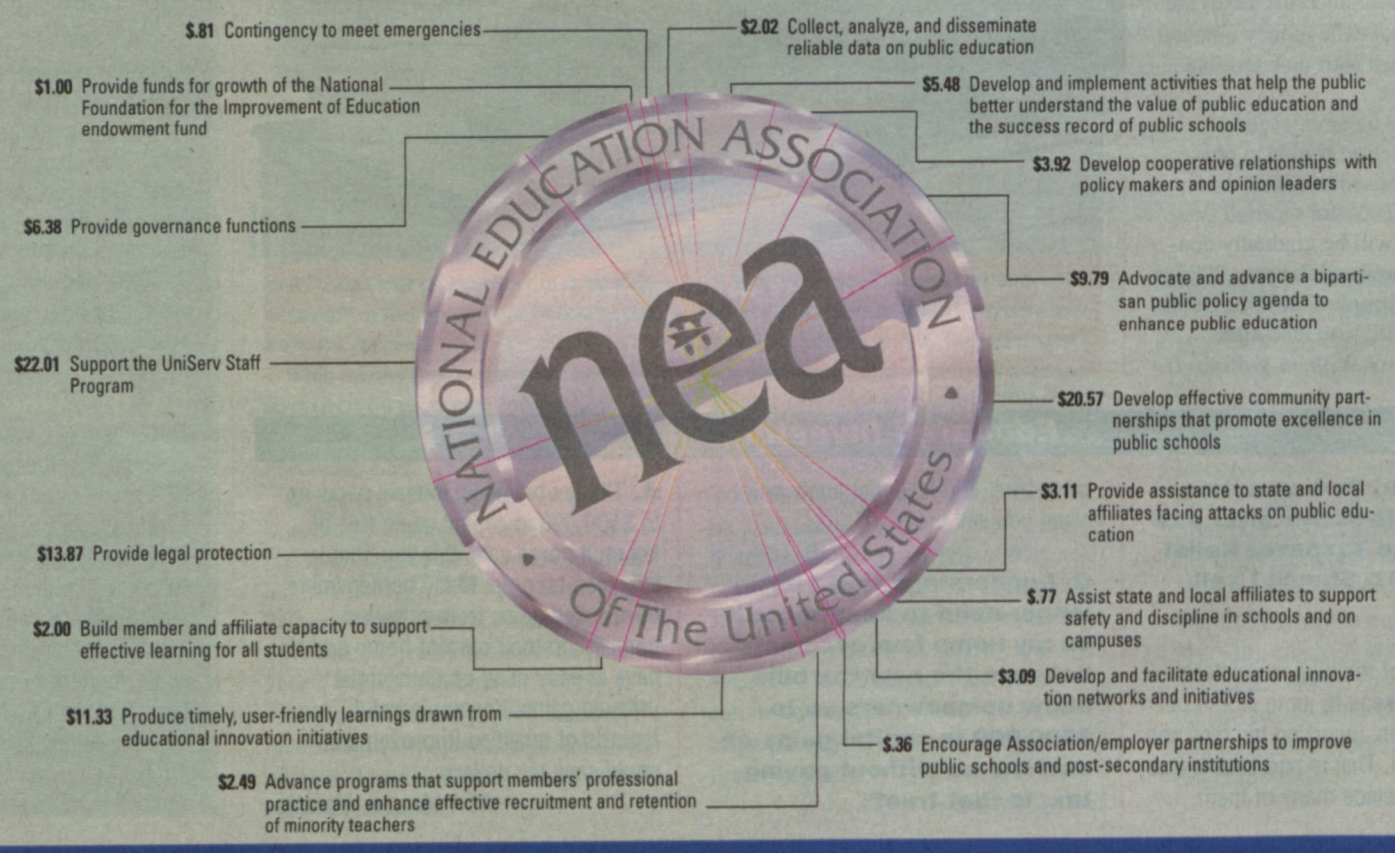
	General Operating Fund	Special Purpose Funds	Capital Improvement Fund	1997 Total Funds	1996 Total Funds
Current Assets	$45,883,568	$ 8,096,702	$ —	$ 53,980,270	$ 53,133,260
Long-term Assets	22,548,479	13,330,980	61,282,561	97,162,020	90,659,476
Total Assets	$68,432,047	$21,427,682	$61,282,561	$151,142,290	$143,792,736
Current Liabilities	$20,597,250	$ 3,068,679	$ 1,465,260	$ 25,131,189	$ 23,197,006
Long-term Liabilities	26,066,850	11,223,244	43,457,122	80,747,216	76,531,280
Total Liabilities	46,664,100	14,291,923	44,922,382	105,878,405	99,728,286
Unrestricted Net Assets	21,767,947	7,135,759	16,360,179	45,263,885	44,064,450
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	$68,432,047	$21,427,682	$61,282,561	$151,142,290	$143,792,736

National Education Association of the United States

General Operating Fund Statement of Activity and Changes in Net Assets Year Ended August 31, 1997

	Budget (Unaudited)	Actual
Total Revenue	$192,767,400	$197,799,275
Expenses by Objective:		
Build broad-based support for a quality public education system	21,882,829	22,155,251
Enhance affiliate and member capacity in generating community partnerships that promote excellence in public schools	22,601,594	23,267,244
Support individual and collective initiatives to create quality teaching and learning for all students	16,940,132	17,177,084
Essential organizational systems that are the foundation for all association activities which expand the rights and further the interests of educational employees and advocate human, civil and economic rights for all	131,163,595	133,983,896
Total Expenses	192,588,150	196,583,475
Changes in Net Assets	$ 179,250	1,215,800
Unrestricted Net Assets, Beginning of Year		20,552,147
Unrestricted Net Assets, End of Year		$ 21,767,947

The following is a breakdown of how NEA dues dollars are allocated to support and represent its members and affiliates in their efforts to achieve the mission of the NEA. $109.00 NEA Dues (Active member, professionally employed)


$.81 Contingency to meet emergencies
$1.00 Provide funds for growth of the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education endowment fund
$6.38 Provide governance functions
$22.01 Support the UniServ Staff Program
$13.87 Provide legal protection
$2.00 Build member and affiliate capacity to support effective learning for all students
$11.33 Produce timely, user-friendly learnings drawn from educational innovation initiatives
$2.49 Advance programs that support members' professional practice and enhance effective recruitment and retention of minority teachers
$2.02 Collect, analyze, and disseminate reliable data on public education
$5.48 Develop and implement activities that help the public better understand the value of public education and the success record of public schools
$3.92 Develop cooperative relationships with policy makers and opinion leaders
$9.79 Advocate and advance a bipartisan public policy agenda to enhance public education
$20.57 Develop effective community partnerships that promote excellence in public schools
$3.11 Provide assistance to state and local affiliates facing attacks on public education
$.77 Assist state and local affiliates to support safety and discipline in schools and on campuses
$3.09 Develop and facilitate educational innovation networks and initiatives
$.36 Encourage Association/employer partnerships to improve public schools and post-secondary institutions
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
nea
Of The United States

NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION *working for you!*

My Turn

Want Respect? Need Rewards?

Jump into national certification. The Teacher of the Year says the water's fine.

By Sharon Draper

The letter promised to help make teaching a profession instead of a job. That caught my eye.

It was 1991. I'd received a letter from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, an organization I'd never heard of.

I nearly dismissed it as one of those pseudo-educational advertising gimmicks that sometimes crowd teachers' mailboxes.

But I didn't. I'd always wanted to have the respect doctors and lawyers get. I'd always dreamed of being part of something that elevated the status of teaching in this country.

So I decided to participate in the National Board's first assessment of teacher quality. "Come on in and evaluate me," I said.

But no evaluator came. They said I was to evaluate myself. Hey, I thought, this is a snap! How could I possibly fail?

Then the big box came—and I mean big. In it was a large portfolio, with more instructions and details than I could absorb at one time. I was overwhelmed.

But the instructions were clear, the goals were understandable, and the mission seemed possible. Teachers had developed the standards I would be measured against, and teachers would evaluate my work. I appreciated that concept immensely.

What I hadn't appreciated was exactly how much work we were talking about. I was expected to videotape my classes several times, keep detailed records of my classroom activities, write in-depth self-evaluations of my teaching methods, and explain how I could improve them.

I was supposed to validate what I taught, how I taught it, how my students learned, if they learned—and if they didn't, then I was to figure out why not. I was going to have to think about what I'd been doing almost without thinking for the past 20 years.

It was hard, time-consuming, painful, and tedious. But doing that self-evaluation turned out to be the most rewarding experience of my professional life. The introspection was valuable, but I got much more than that.

I got to interact with other teachers who were going through the certification process. I got to talk with them about ideas, methods, techniques, and curricular issues. We even traded tales about former students.

It was stimulating and refreshing to be in a room not just with teachers, but with great teachers. I learned more about myself and my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher than I ever have in 20-plus years of teaching.

I was proud to be included in the very first group of teachers to be certified as professionals by the Board. Shortly thereafter, I was prouder still to be elected to the group's board of directors.

I've traveled across the country, talking to teachers about the Board, encouraging them to participate in this valuable, professional process.

I've told countless audiences that while the Board can't single-handedly transform schools, it can be a catalyst for change.

National certification can add a new level to teacher education.

It can offer incentives to current teachers, bring new people into the field, and decrease the loss of quality educators. It can reverse the long-term trend of declining minority interest in teaching.

By recognizing outstanding teaching, a national certification program can elevate the entire profession.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has taught me so much over the last six years, but the most salient lesson can be summed up quite simply: I've learned that the best teacher is a learner, and that teachers are indeed professionals.

Sharon Draper teaches English at Walnut Hills High School in Cincinnati, Ohio. She can be reached at TTYGER@aol.com. For more information on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, call 800/22TEACH.

Sterling Roberts

Cincinnati English teacher and children's author Sharon Draper, an American Federation of Teachers member, was selected as the 1997 National Teacher of the Year last April.

You Said It

Bill Fischer, editor

Our cover story on peer review in November has drawn more mail than any previous cover story, knocking off the previous reigning champion, our April 1997 cover on block scheduling.

We've tried to publish a wide variety of your peer review letters and E-mails over the last two months. Opinions about peer review clearly differ among NEA members, and the letters vividly demonstrate that difference.

Most readers who wrote in, whatever their personal opinion, seemed to feel that the November *NEA Today* did a fair job presenting what the issues—and the controversy—around peer review are all about.

But other readers didn't feel that way at all. Some readers, for instance, felt that the cover headline, "Pat Stedman helps veteran teachers get better—or get out," wrongly put the emphasis on getting rid of teachers, not helping them succeed.

Looking back, it does seem that the headline may have left the impression that peer review programs are more negative in orientation than positive. As the cover story pointed out, that's not the intention of NEA members active in peer review programs.

But would a headline that read simply, "Pat Stedman helps veteran teachers get better," have captured the full essence of what her work is all about—or stimulated an intensive dialogue about peer review?

These are the sort of questions we grapple with all the time. Sometimes we make the "right" call. Sometimes we don't.

You may not always agree with the choices we make. But, in the end, what really matters—more than any specific headline choice—is that you find, inside *NEA Today*, articles that offer you the information you need to make your own judgments about how we can help our schools be as effective as they can be.

I hope you found this information in the November *Today*.

Bill Fischer

Meet

Daughter of two NEA members, basketball star Rebecca Lobo explains how her parents' academic standards helped her become a winner.

When the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) made its splashy debut last summer, Rebecca Lobo was touted as a marquee player who would deliver a slam dunk for women's professional sports. She didn't disappoint.

The 6' 4" forward-center for the New York Liberty helped lead her team to the WNBA championship finals.

In 1996, Lobo spun gold as a member of the U.S. women's Olympic basketball team. Before that, she led the University of Connecticut women's team to a 35-0 record and an NCAA championship—while making the dean's list.

Lobo credits her parents, Dennis and RuthAnn—both educators, both members of the Granby (Connecticut) Education Association (photo at right)—with her success. She spoke recently with NEA Today *writer Karen Gutloff.*

Will Hart

Rebecca Lobo

She's a Winner—On and Off the Court

How did you balance academics and sports in school?
It's difficult, but it can be done. I think you just have to be disciplined and set in your routine. In high school, I would go to practice right after school. As soon as I got home, I tried to get my work done. In college, I scheduled all my classes in the morning, practiced in the afternoon, then I stayed in the study lounge until I got my work done.

Your parents are both educators. How did that affect your approach to school work?
From the time I was a kid, they emphasized how important school work was. It had to get done before everything else.

I played on a team when I was in fourth grade, and I remember the teacher calling home because my grades had slipped. The first thing my Mom said was, "If your grades don't improve, basketball is the first thing to go."

Also, I watched my parents come home from work and do lesson plans and correct papers. I saw how hard they worked, and that set a good example.

What can educators do to encourage girls in sports?
High school coaches can show kids the opportunities that are available for sports scholarships to help them get an education. They can stress to girls that sports are fun and a good way to build lasting friendships—and self-esteem.

Is there a trade-off between athletics and femininity?
I think strong, female athletes are more accepted now. Being aggressive and competitive when you're out playing a sport doesn't take away from who you are off the court. It just adds to it.

Peter Glass

When you watch professional women's basketball, for example, you see Lisa Leslie on the court performing well, sweating, and being aggressive. Then you see her off the court, working as a fashion model.

Do you think the WNBA has changed the image or perception of women athletes?
I think it's broken through a lot of the stereotypes that were out there. People who have never seen a woman compete at the professional level now realize how talented female athletes are.

Down the line, maybe women in professional sports can impact how women are treated in the workplace and in other areas.

When you come to our games, you see little boys asking for our autographs. Maybe they'll treat little girls their age differently or look at them differently, now and in years to come.

Do you consider yourself a role model for young people?
I can't say that I'm not a role model, because a kid out there might say I am. I think athletes have a responsibility to realize that little eyes are watching them. I want to be a good person and live my life the right way, keeping in mind that there might be a little kid who's watching what I do.

What do you tell kids when you're out visiting schools?
I tell them to have goals and dreams. I tell them not to be embarrassed to have dreams, because I've had so many come true in my life. I tell them that even if opportunities aren't there now, that doesn't mean they won't be there next year or five years from now.

I use the WNBA as the perfect example. Ever since I was a kid, I dreamed of playing basketball professionally. But until a year ago, there wasn't even a league.

You're involved in so many community activities. Which are most satisfying?
The two causes I really enjoy working for are breast cancer awareness and anything that has to do with children.

My mother is a breast cancer survivor, so when something hits close to home like that, you always want to do as much as you can to help find a cure.

I also work with the Children's Miracle Network. As an athlete, I'm blessed with physical abilities and health. I think it's the right thing to do to help kids who don't have those things.

Your team was just one game shy of winning the WNBA championship. How do you handle losses like that?
You don't forget it. I haven't forgotten what it felt like when we walked off that court, and I'll use that feeling to help motivate me next year.

Can anything top winning an Olympic gold medal?
I can't say the Olympic gold tops the NCAA championship, but it was something different. You have to look forward. My next goal is the WNBA championship. After that, the Olympic gold in 2000.

What are you proudest of?
I'm proudest of the team goals I've helped achieve, but I'm also proud of awards that look at academics or what I've done off the court and in the community service arena.

The most important thing is who I am as a whole person. When people recognize that, that makes me feel the best.

For More Information

To learn more about Rebecca Lobo, the Women's National Basketball Association, and other players, visit the WNBA Web site at www.wnba.com. On the Web site, fans can find out how to send E-mail to their favorite players.

Debate

Has Student Fundraising Gone Too Far?

Yes

Mary Neff is an English teacher at Odessa High School in western Texas. A 21-year teaching veteran and Association activist, Neff co-edits her local Association newsletter in Ector County and has held local Association office. Neff currently serves on her school district's policy and planning committee.

I know student fundraising is getting out of hand when:

- I cover a class for a fellow teacher, and, as her students enter my room, they immediately ask me if I sell anything to eat.
- Anxious teenagers plead with me to please buy a cookbook, candy bar, ham, fruit box, posters, even manure to fertilize my lawn.
- Students go beyond raising money for an academic competition across the state and, instead, raise funds to go to Disneyland.
- One of my seniors takes a school-sponsored cruise to the Bahamas. On the day they are to explore the islands, the student can't find his boarding pass and has to remain on the ship. For this, he misses three days of school.
- An 11-year-old New Jersey boy, last seen going door-to-door selling wrapping paper for a school fundraiser, is found murdered.

These events—and particularly this recent tragedy—should give us all pause. What are we really asking children to do when they're handed the "opportunity" to raise money for extras? What are we really selling?

Some say the real-world experience students gain from fundraising—and the travel it buys—builds character and broadens horizons.

But I often wonder if the students in Japan are out selling stationary and smoked sausage in the evenings. Are we, in America, so bereft of character-building opportunities that we must ask our children to go door-to-door?

My fantasy is a complete school year without fundraisers. Who would miss the bags of candy, brochures full of merchandise, lost or stolen collection envelopes, and teachers-turned-bill collectors?

I would welcome back the lost time and energy spent raising money. My time is better spent preparing for instruction. Students' time is better spent in the classroom and in after-school clubs that pursue interests, not dollars.

We should rely more on booster clubs made up of parents and patrons who raise money to supplement the activities that are important to them. And we should establish clearer priorities for our school systems and the communities that fund them.

Asking a community to finance any and all activities and materials that are not covered by the school budget is grossly unfair to everyone. We need to accept the simple fact that if it's not in the budget, perhaps we won't get it.

And perhaps we don't need it. Maybe we shouldn't raise money for unlimited student travel and laptops to keep athletic statistics, while at the same time issuing paperback books held together with rubber bands.

When we tell taxpayers they have to pay an additional $25 in property taxes, maybe we can understand why they rebel.

After all the fruit cakes, greeting cards, and bumper stickers they've already bought, why should they have a clear picture of what the public schools are trying to accomplish?

Let's face it: We are slowly bleeding money out of our communities to finance frills and dubious endeavors.

If you ask our school patrons what their goals for our schools are, I don't think a trip to Never-Never Land would be high on the list.

John Miller

No

Clorinda Graziano teaches instrumental music at Frank Borman Middle School in Phoenix, Arizona. An Association activist, she's served as chair of her local negotiations team for three years. Last year, Graziano helped her band students raise $160,000 so they could march in the New Year's Day Parade in London.

I have fond memories of selling Girl Scout cookies when I was in the third grade and going door-to-door with my mother raising money for various charities.

My biggest fundraising education came in high school, helping raise money for band and chorus annual trips. It's amazing to me, as I think back now, how much I learned from those experiences.

I learned about bookkeeping, banking, ordering, marketing, dealing with salespeople, budgeting, responsibility, working as a group, goal-setting, and achievement—all "real-life" skills.

If we didn't raise the money, we didn't go—that was the bottom line. That was a tremendous lesson to learn at a young age.

All the skills I learned as a student fundraiser have helped me immensely as a music instructor. Our schools always needs money for something that's outside the spectrum of what the school district can provide.

Almost all of the handbell and handchime sets at individual schools are paid for through music student or PTA fundraisers. Students' summer music camp tuitions are routinely funded by candy sales.

By far the biggest fundraising project I've been involved in was our effort to send 104 junior high band students and chaperones to London to march in last year's New Year's Day Parade.

Each student and chaperone had to earn $1,525 to go. With more than 70 percent of our students on free or reduced-price lunch, there aren't a lot of families with extra money to shell out every time their children want something. We either help them earn their own way, or they can't go.

So we helped. We set up individual accounts for each student. What they raised was credited toward their own trip. Students sold candy, washed cars, held carnivals, sponsored volleyball tournaments, and more.

It paid off. Going to London was a great experience for all of us.

I know the students took the trip more seriously because they worked so hard to go, and because so many people had cared enough about them to send them on the trip of a lifetime.

I was amazed to hear so many parents tell me how much the fundraising had brought their families together. That unexpected benefit really boosted students' self-esteem.

Student fundraising does so much more than just raise money for school projects. It would be a shame if the appalling murder of a New Jersey boy while soliciting fundraising orders door-to-door forces an end to all student fundraising efforts.

It's not the school's fault that the child was alone, selling in a neighborhood to people he didn't know.

Schools have been trumpeting the message—"don't sell by yourself, don't sell to strangers, don't sell in strange neighborhoods"—for years. Plus, the child's parents should have known where he was on a Saturday afternoon and should have gone over the rules with him in advance.

A few unfortunate and preventable incidences shouldn't curtail the opportunities of all.

There are too many lifetime skills that can be learned and experiences gained to simply end student fundraising. What's at stake is much more than just a few dollars.

What's Your Opinion?

Has student fundraising gone too far?

To vote, visit our Web site at **www.nea.org/neatoday** and see the results instantly.

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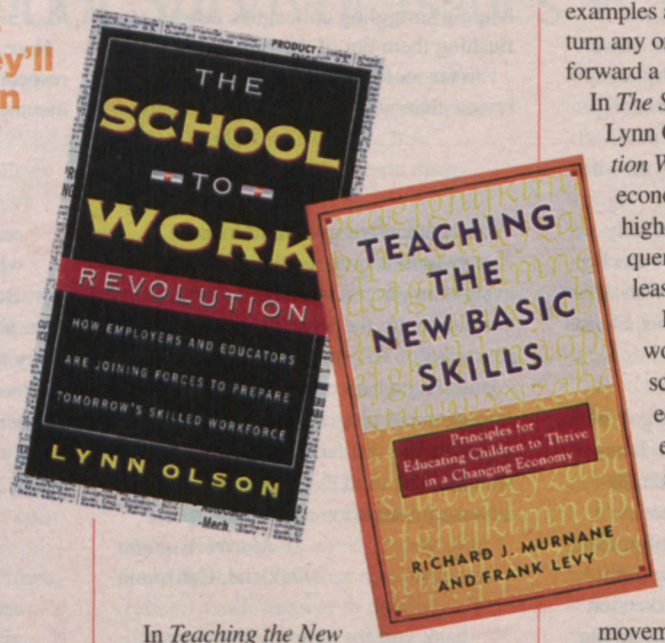
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Principles for Educating Children to Thrive in a Changing Economy
RICHARD J. MURNANE AND FRANK LEVY

Teaching the New Basic Skills
Principles for Educating Children to Thrive in a Changing Economy
Richard J. Murnane and Frank Levy. The Free Press, 250 pp., $23.50, 800/223-2348.

The School-to-Work Revolution
How Employers and Educators Are Joining Forces To Prepare Tomorrow's Skilled Workforce
Lynn Olson. Addison-Wesley, 328 pp., $25, 800/552-2259.

Twenty years ago, a high school diploma was a "ticket to the middle class," as the authors of *Teaching the New Basic Skills* put it.

Not true anymore.

In today's economy, a high school diploma is, too often, a ticket to a lifetime of low-wage, dead-end jobs.

That needn't be true forever. The authors of these two books dare to believe that a high school education—if substantially changed—could have meaning in the job market again.

In *Teaching the New Basic Skills*, Harvard education professor Richard Murnane and MIT economics prof Frank Levy estimate that half of recent high school graduates "have an education that is no longer in demand."

Their remedy for this "ever-growing mismatch"? Teaching kids "the new basics"—how to work in groups, make oral and written presentations, solve problems, use computers, and more.

To increase the number of kids who master these skills, Murnane and Levy write, schools, like companies, must undergo radical reorganization. Using examples and five principles that could turn any organization around, they put forward a useful blueprint.

In *The School-to-Work Revolution*, Lynn Olson, senior editor at *Education Week*, agrees that "modern economies place a premium on higher skills, with drastic consequences for the youngest and least educated."

Her solution: a school-to-work movement that brings schools, businesses, and higher education together to reform education and better prepare students for both continuing education *and* work.

Like a landscape artist, Olson paints a big picture of the current school-to-work movement, complete with apprenticeships, tech prep, career academies, service learning, vocational ed, cooperative learning, job shadowing, and more.

More valuable, she provides a detailed listing of the pitfalls and potential of the school-to-work movement that could exist in the future.

In sum, Olson says schools shouldn't "sacrifice the preparation of a thinking democratic citizenship on the altar of work." But neither should they ignore the realities of today's economy.

How to find middle ground? Try starting with these two books.

—*Stefanie Weiss*

NEA Professional Library Top 10 Bestseller List

1 Moving to the Block: Getting Ready to Teach in Extended Periods of Learning Time. Fleming, Olenn, Schoenstein, and Eineder. ($4.50)This compact book answers your questions about block scheduling. (#2159-2-10-FB)

2 Inspiring Quality in Your School. Robert A. Sullo. ($14.95) This book shows why *you* are the most important person to inspire quality in your school. (#2951-8-10-FB)

3 Bright Ideas: A Pocket Mentor for Beginning Teachers. Mary Clement. ($4.50) This checklist reveals the secrets of surviving the first year of teaching. (#2153-3-10-FB)

4 The First-Year Teacher: Teaching with Confidence (K-8). Bosch & Kersey. ($14.95) The ultimate first-year teacher's handbook. (#1862-1-10-FB)

5 Inspiring Discipline: A Practical Guide for Today's Classrooms. Merrill Harmin. ($10.95) Teachers say, "We want how-to materials on discipline." This book delivers with strategies you can put to use immediately in your classroom. (#2950-X-10-FB)

6 Pitfalls and Potholes: A Checklist for Avoiding Common Mistakes of Beginning Teachers. Barbara A. Murray and Kenneth T. Murray. ($4.50) The second title in the Checklist Series offers practical advice to new teachers. (#2151-7-10-FB)

7 Countdown to the First Day of School. Leo M. Schell & Paul Burden. ($4.50) A must-have checklist for every beginning elementary school teacher. (#2150-9-10-FB)

8 Portfolio Practices: Thinking Through the Assessment of Children's Work. Steve Seidel, et al. ($14.95) Learn the "nuts and bolts" of student portfolios and discover fresh ways to think about assessment. (#1858-3-10-FB)

9 Journey to School Reform: Moving from Reflection to Action Through Storytelling. David K. Wallace, editor. ($12.95) A practical guide to connecting school reform to student success in ways that build a new culture of leadership in your school. (#1873-0-00-FB)

10 Creating Interactive Environments in the Secondary School. Lois T. Stover, Gloria A. Neubert, and James C. Lawlor. ($14.95) A practical workbook that shows you how to make your classroom *really* interactive. (#7502-8-10-FB)

This month's rankings are based on last month's sales for all books published by the NEA Professional Library, a service for all 2.3 million NEA members financed solely by the sale of books and other professional development materials to the education community.

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Katie—Down The Pike
Carol March McLernon. *72 pp., send check for $8 (includes s&h) to the author, N3784 Bowers Rd., Lake Geneva, WI 53147.* This novella for young readers, set in a Midwestern town in the 1850s, features 10-year-old Katie McKenna and a traveling church bell. Based on real events.

Get Into The Act
Pamela Zimba and Dianne Sullivan. *48 pp., Good Apple/Simon & Schuster, $6.99 plus $3 s&h, 800/421-5565, ask for G1544.* This book suggests collaborative activities to get fourth through eighth grade students to write and perform mysteries, sitcoms, commercials, epic tales, and more.

Polish-American Calendar
Don Samull. *16 pp., send $4 plus $.95 s&h to the author, 6261 Artesian St., Detroit, MI 48228.* This 1998 calendar features 12 recipes from the Old Country, plus 365 brief notes on Polish history and culture, one for each day of the year.

My Wild Friends
Blanche Derby. *White Star Press, 264 pp., $20 plus $4 s&h, P.O. Box 1268, Northampton, MA 01061, 413/584-3381.* In this beautifully illustrated book, you'll learn how to use wild plants as food. Includes 50 recipes, plus information on plant habitats, the best parts of plants to use, and the best times to harvest.

Letters

Required Reading

As I read Dot Fowler's seven-part "secret" to teaching reading (Cover story, January), I was reassured in my knowledge base. For me, there were no great surprises in your list.

But too many children needlessly experience early reading failure because some educational personnel either don't know these "secrets" or don't accept them.

The National Academy of Sciences report should be required reading for all elementary teachers and principals. I sincerely hope that this "new" information is widely disseminated and heeded.

Celia Sofie
Northport, Alabama

Dot Fowler sounds like a superb reading teacher. But *NEA Today* should be ashamed of its headline: "What's the Secret to Teaching Reading? Right now, Dot Fowler may be the only teacher who knows."

There are many talented classroom teachers out there who have been spending their own money and after-school hours splicing together a balanced, effective reading program, despite the crazy fads that bureaucrats, publishers, and education reformers have tried to force on them.

Susan Ryono
Torrance, California

I applaud your coverage of Fowler's balanced teaching of reading, but her philosophy and techniques are certainly not a secret. Since 1995, classroom teachers and reading specialists in Clark County have been trained in the very same components that Fowler is finding successful. The secret is out.

Jan Thomas
Las Vegas, Nevada

Saluting ESPs

Karen Mahurin's article, "Conquering the Divide Between Teachers and ESPs" (Letters, January), prompted me to ponder what would we do without ESPs.

I don't want to find out what I would do without Louise Baker. She's the aide who assists during my social studies class made up of learning disabled students and students with reading deficits.

Louise is right there to help me deliver information. She is invaluable inside my class and out. She coordinates school fundraising activities, the safety patrol students' annual trip, and more—all while working a second job.

Louise Baker is an ESP who is truly appreciated and respected by this teacher.

Charlotte Myer
Inverness, Florida

Bigotry

A recent letter equates being gay with sexual perversion (Letters, January). An article in the same issue discusses the film *Amistad*. If a reader wrote a letter objecting to the film, using the *n*-word, would *NEA Today* print it?

Saying that being gay is a perversion is every bit as offensive and inappropriate as using words that are racially biased. That *NEA Today* allowed the letter to run is simply shameful.

Sharon Miken
Palmyra, New Jersey

More on Peer Review

Those opposed to teacher involvement in evaluating teachers base their feelings on the naïve notion that principals do the job correctly (Cover story, November).

Not true for three reasons: 1) Principals go after the wrong things. 2) They don't know what's happening in classrooms. 3) They usually seek the easy way out.

Teachers are not saints, but they are better peer evaluators than principals for three reasons: 1) They are more interested in quality instruction. 2) They have a better idea of what's really happening in the classroom. 3) They're more interested in helping struggling colleagues instead of flushing them out of the profession.

I'm far more comfortable with peer review than with principals' judgments.

Dan Lindsay
Bellevue, Washington

I'm adamantly opposed to local or state unions participating in district evaluation programs. Supervision and evaluation are the legal and professional functions of school administrators.

Union members can be part of peer improvement programs for teachers experiencing difficulty, but teachers shouldn't be used to develop and report adverse information about colleagues.

Muriel Ayanaba
Oakland, California

Thank you for your excellent piece on peer review. As a 52-year-old student teacher about to enter the teaching profession, I can point to numerous reviews by supervisors that were pointless, sit-down charades. On a few occasions, the reviews were mean-spirited, misguided, vicious assaults conducted ostensibly to improve job performance.

The reviews described in your article seem to be a step forward.

Joseph Pennino
Denver, Colorado

In arguing against peer review, Bill Harshbarger never once mentions the students and their right to a quality education (Debate, November). Harshbarger did mention that the bad teachers may get upset, and the peer reviewers may find it hard to look themselves in the mirror. But I'd find it harder to look students in the face and explain why they have an incompetent teacher.

How can we expect the public to respect us when we continue to support incompetent teachers?

Leonard Rutecki, Jr.
Howard, Pennsylvania

Peer reviewer Pat Stedman is right when she says we need to set priorities. But what's right for her may not be right for all. Fortunately, there are as many teaching styles—and classrooms—as there are teachers.

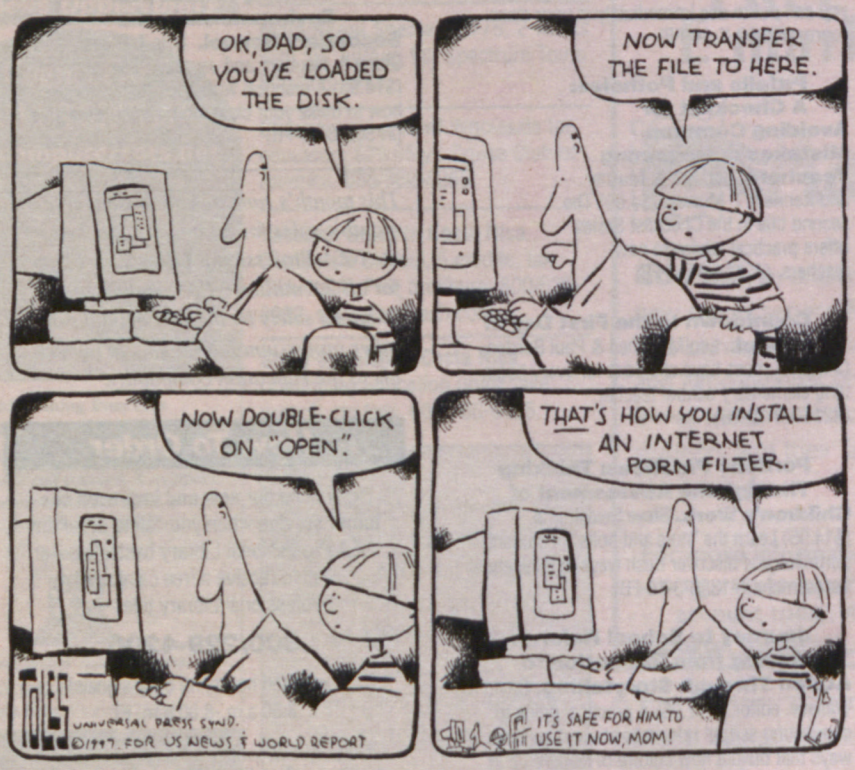
Where peer review is being used, let's make sure we are evaluating fairly and not by personal biases.

Julia Probasco
Martinsville, Indiana

Peer review professes to be a collegial process. It's not. The Columbus, Ohio, version of peer review is a union-endorsed replication of the administration's power and value system.

Even more troubling, the Association loses its soul by devaluing what's at the heart of unionism: protection of an individual who is unjustly treated. When Association members defend a concept called "teacher professionalism," they no longer protect teachers.

Sidney Kardon
Huntington Woods, Michigan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Making a Stink

Your article on indoor air quality neglected to mention some of the most common—and most toxic—pollutants affecting people who suffer from respiratory disease (Inside Scoop, October). These include perfumes, scented hand lotions and candles, room deodorizers, and scented laundry aids.

Joanna Jones
Waimea, Hawaii

In the search for cleaner indoor air, you neglected to mention the valuable role that school nurses can play in collecting and analyzing research and evidence. Perhaps if student illnesses were documented, legislatures would act more promptly.

Karen Chapman
Algonquin, Illinois

Holding Back

Your short news item titled "Fewer social promotions" is quite misleading (Bottom Line, November).

Why are a third of 15- to 17-year-olds enrolled below their age-appropriate grade? Because their parents decided to hold them back and give them an advantage—not because social promotion is on the wane.

A Letter from: Sherman, Texas

Edison School Survivor Issues Warning: 'Buyer Beware'

I had waited all my life to be a teacher. So I was thrilled when I was hired in the fall of 1996 as a teacher at Washington Elementary—an Edison school that "values teachers and their ideas."

Located in Sherman, Texas, Washington Elementary is one of a growing number of public schools managed for profit by a company launched by Channel One founder Chris Whittle.

In a two-week summer training session, I was taught that first-year teachers at Edison schools are considered assets and are treated as professionals. I was told that my "fresh, new ideas" would be welcome.

I was delighted to hear these things. I listened carefully to the goals that the staff wanted to address during the year. I began problem-solving. I wrote programs. I assisted others. I stayed up late at night excitedly churning ideas into proposals.

It wasn't long before I got the sinking feeling that my ideas weren't welcome at all.

Only two of the many programs I created were approved by the school's leadership team—but they were never implemented.

Somehow, my ideas were seen as a challenge to authority, even an attempt to make others on the staff look bad. I was told that I shouldn't even try to present any ideas because I was "only a first-year teacher."

This was the first of many disappointments.

- I was stunned to find out that teachers routinely were pitted against each other in a competition for favor and money.

One example: When the Edison folks noticed good teaching practice, they picked teachers to present at workshops—all expenses paid, the chance to travel, and extra pay.

But no matter how creative and worthy some teachers were, if they didn't keep their mouths shut and promote Edison as the answer to education's ills, they didn't go anywhere.

- I was shocked to see that the Edison folks were willing to punish those they saw as disloyal. One teacher on the leadership team dared to suggest that we move to shared decision making—which is part of the Edison model.

After telling the teacher in writing that she hadn't been loyal, administrators dismissed her from the leadership team and warned her to stop all negative communications inside or outside of school—or risk losing her job.

- Some of the promises Edison made turned out to be outright lies. "Six weeks of training during the summer for all new teachers" turned out to be two weeks. "Two hours planning time built into the daily schedule" turned out to be much less. "Higher pay than other district teachers get" turned out to be the same per diem pay rate.

By the end of my first year, it was clear that the Edison Project at Washington Elementary hadn't lived up to its high ideals.

Five teachers had asked for transfers, four had filed grievances against the administration, and two probationary teachers had been non-renewed.

I was told I wasn't being renewed in February. At the time, I had had one evaluation. It was a good one.

Edison literature states that a teacher will be evaluated on the basis of "information provided by student improvement scores, classroom observations, and the contents of the teacher's professional portfolio."

My students' achievements were high, I was observed only once and received a good evaluation, and I had compiled a portfolio that no one asked to see, much less evaluate.

I used that portfolio to look for another job—and it worked. Marjorie Vasquez, an elementary school principal in the Celina Independent School District, hired me.

This principal talked to my colleagues, looked at my portfolio, watched the videotape of my final evaluation, and found out all she wanted to know about Washington Elementary and the Edison Project.

Now I'm in a real school at last! At the end of each day, I'm so thankful to have found honesty, integrity, and excellence in education.

What a contrast between this wonderful public school and Edison. In Celina public schools, the bottom line is the kids. In the Edison school, the bottom line is always the almighty dollar.

There's nothing that Edison does for a school district that a school district can't do for itself—and do better. Those teachers who managed to get out of Edison and into other schools are more than willing to testify to this.

For those who are thinking of buying into the Edison rhetoric, I have only two words: "Buyer beware."

Tiffany Lowe is a member of the Celina Education Association in Sherman, Texas. She's now teaching third grade at Celina Elementary School and can be reached at Mkearnest@aol.com.

In the past 12 years, only one student—out of about 1,200 students I've had—was held back. Administrators use social promotion to rid their schools of problem students. Classroom teachers have no say in the fate of such students.

Cheryl Gibbs
Birmingham, Michigan

Shades of Brown

Steven Bollar made a statement in his article, "What Does an Elementary School Teacher Look Like?" that really touched me (November, Letters). He said, "If you think about it, nobody is Black, and nobody is white. We're all just shades of brown."

As a kindergarten teacher in the Midwest, I'll remember those lines the next time my children are coloring faces on people and ask me for white crayons. Thanks for making my day.

Richard Tepler
Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

Steven Bollar's students are lucky to have him as their teacher.

I also love what I do, and while I may fit the stereotypical teacher profile just slightly more than he does—I'm white but not yet middle-aged—my students and I have learned together that what makes a teacher is definitely not on the outside.

Debbie Stern
Santa Monica, California

Holiday Traditions

When responding to your Dilemma question about celebrating holidays in the classroom, one NEA member states that she asks students "to draw a picture of a family Christmas tradition . . . . Students often find that their family's Christmas traditions are similar to those of fellow students."

We should be teaching about the diversity of beliefs in America, rather than perpetuating the same narrow-minded view that "everyone" in America is Christian. This idea didn't belong in *NEA Today*.

Barbara Kuznetz
Seattle, Washington

Stamp Out Stereotypes

Our profession is learning every day how to be more sensitive to diversity. How embarrassing that *NEA Today* would choose to illustrate an article on juvenile diabetes with a photo of an overweight child, pigging out on chips and soda in front of the TV set (Health, November).

One of our second graders was recently diagnosed with diabetes. She's a petite child whose parents have raised her with great care, providing good nutrition, attention, and love. Knowing her and seeing this photo, I'm offended.

Noel Ferguson
Cassville, Wisconsin

Books by NEA Members

A few years ago, I wrote to *NEA Today* suggesting a column posting volumes written by NEA members. Lo and behold, you did exactly that—and my own book was featured among the initial offerings. Let it never be said that you do not respond to reader comment!

Now that I've retired after 35 years in the classroom, I'd be remiss if I didn't offer a public thank you. I've made good friends among NEA members thanks to your column. Three of them are working on their first books—and, of course, they hope to be listed in the Books by NEA Members column, too.

David Collins
Moline, Illinois

Let's Talk

Share your ideas, comments, and opinions with *NEA Today* in one of five ways:

- By mail: Write to Letters, NEA Today, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036
- By the Web: Go to www.nea.org/neatoday and click on "Submit a Letter to the Editor"
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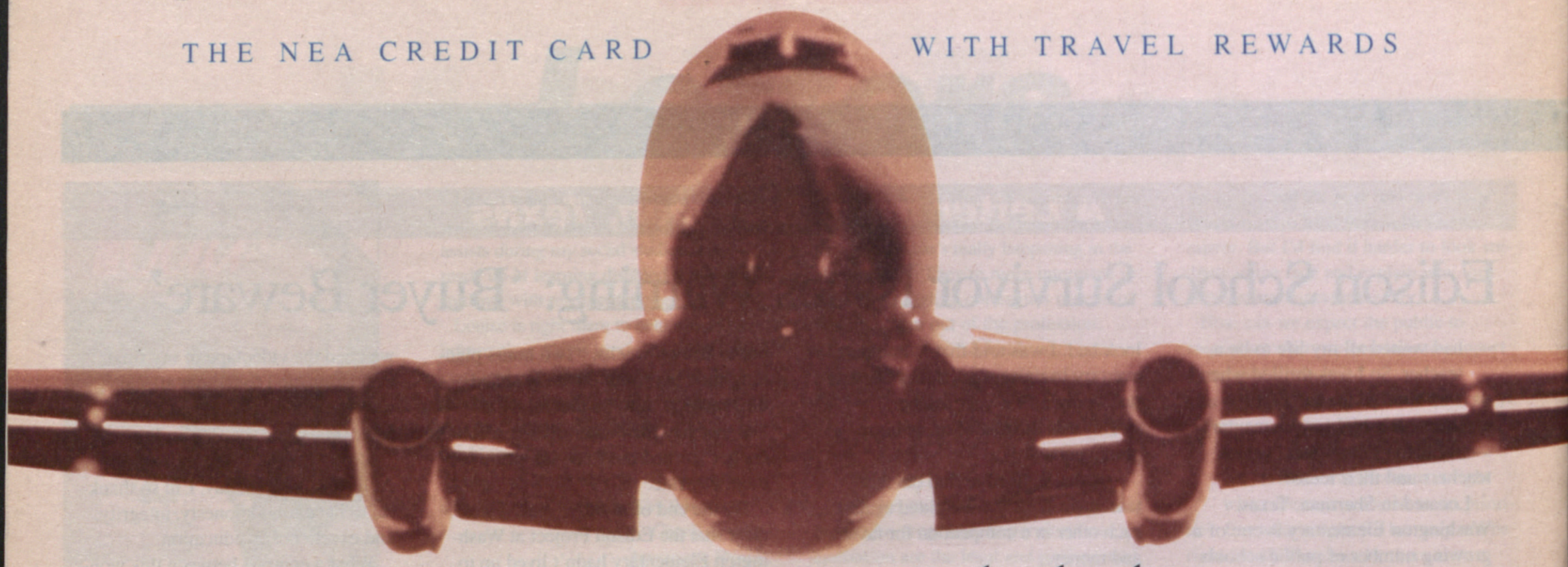

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Air travel rewards consist of a scheduled round-trip ticket for travel within or between two designated zones of the lower 48 states (Zone 1 – locations within the Eastern and Central time zones; Zone 2 – locations within the Mountain and Pacific time zones); plus travel from Alaska and Hawaii. The number of *Points* and corresponding maximum dollar value of tickets ("MDV") required for travel are: for travel wholly contained within Zone 1 or Zone 2: 10,000/$300; between Zones 1 and 2: 15,000/$500; to Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, the Bahamas or Bermuda: 25,000/$600; to Europe (and any other international destination which may be available): 35,000/$1,000.

MDV includes taxes and destination fees. Tickets will be Economy class and will be the lowest available published fare at the time of booking. Whenever possible a direct flight will be booked; there is a limit of two connections. Actual date and time of travel are subject to availability. You may select a carrier and/or upgrade to first class travel. If you choose either, you may charge the cost difference to your *Travel Rewards* credit card and earn *Points* for the transaction. Additional terms apply. All reservations and ticketing must be at least 21 days before travel date. All travel must include a Saturday night stay. For international travel, your stay must be at least seven days but no more than 30 days. Other restrictions apply. Common Carrier Travel Accident Insurance coverage is applicable to any airline ticket obtained with *Points* and/or paid for with your *Travel Rewards* credit card. See your card benefits materials for coverage details.

Automobile rental rewards are for midsize vehicles with pickup and return to the same rental location anywhere within the United States. Advance reservations of at least seven days are required and are subject to availability. You must meet all credit, age, and driver requirements in effect at the time and place of rental. 2,000 *Points* are needed for each single day rental (MDV: $60, including tax); 1,000 *Points* for a single weekend day rental (MDV: $35, including tax) and 9,000 *Points* for a seven-day rental period (MDV: $300, including tax). Optional charges are your responsibility. Other conditions apply. Your credit card supplemental collision damage waiver coverage is available.

Hotel accommodation rewards are valid at participating properties in the United States. Advance reservations of at least seven days are required and are subject to availability. There is no minimum stay requirement. Rewards are valid for a standard single- or double-occupancy room with a nightly rate, including tax. Personal, optional and incidental expenses are your responsibility. These are the current requirements for a hotel accommodation reward; for a nightly room rate up to $110: 3,000 *Points* and for a room rate up to $200: 5000 *Points*.

The Program has a yearly fee, currently $20. You may accrue an annual maximum of 70,000 *Points*. Your *Points* may not be combined with anyone else's *Points*. *Points* will expire five years from the end of the year in which they are earned. *Points* have no cash value. *Points* may be earned and redeemed only if your account is in good standing.

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